Stourbridge
CHRONICLE
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Damning report into council department by Ofsted

FAILINGS OVER CHILD SERVICES

Report by David Cosgrove

DUDLEY Council's children's services department has been branded 'inadequate' in a damning report by Ofsted inspectors.

The report, released this week, says the service, which includes adoption, fostering and child protection services, and the local safeguarding children's board – is failing the borough's youngsters.

This follows an inspection by the watchdog in January and February. A Government commissioner will be brought in to help run the department for the next three months.

Council chief executive Sarah Norman admitted the report highlighted 'serious and widespread failures in services provided to children and young people in Dudley'.

Ukip group leader Paul Brothwood blasted the 'systemic failures' at the heart of children's services. He said: "Time and time again my group have raised their concerns about children's services across the borough.

Widespread

"For our borough to move forward the controlling Labour group must be held to account for these long systemic failures. On nearly every level the council has come out as inadequate. These failures are long-standing and show serious widespread faults."

In a 2011 inspection, Dudley's children's services was rated as 'adequate' overall. However, bosses had recognised recent failings in the system after the council's own assessment of the service flagged up long-standing issues.

An improvement board was set up in September and chiefs said the authority has moved to make things better.

"While the report acknowledges these efforts, it also confirms it will take time to see the benefits of the work.

Sarah Norman said: "We fully accept Ofsted's findings and the inspection has confirmed our own self-assessment of the services and we will continue at pace to rectify the issues.

"We have acted quickly over the last 12 months to drive forward these changes and we are pleased the report confirms 'strong leadership' is now in place.

"Nevertheless, overall, Ofsted concluded there are serious and widespread failures in services provided to children and young people in Dudley.

"We have already appointed Liz Murphy as the new chairperson of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board."

PIERS-ING SENSE OF HUMOUR OVER WHEEL JIBES

Len Lenihan and Harry Jones wear Piers Morgan masks to ride the DY Eye following the journalist's criticism

DUDLEY residents played the fool to promote their latest under-fire attraction.

Dozens donned Piers Morgan masks to ride the DY Eye on April Fools Day. It followed criticism of the Ferris wheel from the journalist and presenter.

The protest was organised to show The Good Morning Britain host that the people of Dudley had a sense of humour.

Morgan had sparked controversy by saying he could think of 'no grimmer view panorama than Dudley'.

He was invited to see the sights for himself, but declined. Ride operators say the attraction has been popular with localsand anyone who went along to the attraction on Friday morning wearing a mask got a free ride.

Dave Carter, Arcade Toy Shop owner, said: "The idea has been to poke a bit of fun back at Piers Morgan about his comments made, to prove the people of Dudley have a sense of humour.

"Around 7,000 people have already ridden the attraction, which is well on the way to achieving the target of 10,000 when the ride gets dismantled. The attraction brings more people into the town which is great for business."

There are now talks to bring the wheel in next year. Steve Edwards, organiser of The Only Way Is Dudley, said: "The town centre is an integral part of Dudley, it is one of the oldest market places in the country.

"When people go to visit the zoo, castle and museum, they can also come to the wheel and then so a bit of shopping around the town."

Operator Harry Jones said: "The ride has been as popular in Dudley as anywhere else."

● Blessing – Page 9

COMEDY

TV comic Nathan is the headline act

A STAR of TV's Live At The Apollo and Mock The Week will headline a comedy night in Stourbridge tomorrow night (Friday).

Nathan Caton tops the bill at Fitz of Laughter Comedy Club, in the marquee downstairs at Katie Fitzgerald's in Enville Street, Wollaston.

Also on the bill are Andrew Bird and Anthony Brown, who appeared in Peter Kay's Phoenix Nights.

Dudley's Wayne Beese, aged 35, is resident compere. Doors open at 8pm and tickets are £10. Call 07507 015397.

LEGACY

Fundraising vow as Ivan loses fight

AN inspirational cancer sufferer has lost his battle against the disease – after vowing to raise as much money as he could for Mary Stevens Hospice.

Company director Ivan Partridge, aged 55, of Quarry Bank, was diagnosed last year with a rare form of melanoma, prompting him to require major facial surgery.

Mr Partridge had been admitted to the hospice over the last fortnight and offered revolutionary treatment. He had vowed to raise money for the Stourbridge-based charity. Only last week, The Chronicle reported on his fundraising efforts.

● Courageous – Page 6

CAMPAIGN

Call for inquiry over safety on the roads

A SEDGLEY campaign group has secured an independent investigation into road safety conditions.

The Northway Action Group for Road Safety has for several years campaigned for Dudley Council to review Northway following residents' safety fears.

Now transport consultants Mott MacDonald have been commissioned to prepare an independent report into the road.

Councillor Hilary Bills added: "We now feel it best to take a step back and let this outside company help them more."

INSIDE:

RELOCATION OF WAR MEMORIAL

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School could make way for homes

AN historic former school and council building could be demolished to make way for homes – to the anger of heritage groups desperate to save it.

If plans are passed, the Claughton Centre in Dudley, formerly the Sir Gilbert Claughton School, will be flattened and the land made available for a housing development.

The school closed in 1990 and was taken over by Dudley Council which renamed it the Claughton Centre and used it as offices.

Developers see the site, in Blower's Green Road, as an opportunity to get rid of disused buildings and create much-needed homes but heritage groups have objected, saying it will result in a important building being wiped out. Save Britain's Heritage and The Victorian Society have both raised concerns with Dudley Council.

Around 56 homes would be built on the site, which falls within a regeneration corridor where council bosses are keen to see disused employment sites redeveloped for housing.

An outline application has been recommended for approval by Dudley Council officers with councillors expected to make a final decision this week.

But the groups remain hopeful the building can be saved. In its letter of objection, Save Britain's Heritage said: "The Claughton Centre is a 1904 Edwardian school building of architectural merit, built to designs of Barrowcliff and Allcock, a Loughborough firm with several listed buildings to their name.

"It is built of red brick with buff terracotta detailing, in the Jacobean style, and is an attractive building worthy of retention and re-use."

The Victorian Society said: "We are not persuaded by the argument that the building cannot be adapted for another use which may include residential. We consider that the building forms an important part of the townscape on a major approach road to Dudley town centre.

"We strongly object to the demolition of this building and to this application as presented."

Work starts on £5m jobs boosting scheme

BUILDING work has started on a new £5 million development in Dudley that will create 80 jobs.

Castlegate Drive at the Castlegate Business Park was given planning permission back in November and work is now under way.

It will include a Greene King pub, a KFC drive-thru restaurant and a Costa Coffee drive-thru.

The brands will open near the existing restaurants including Frankie and Benny's and Pizza Hut, as well as the Showcase Cinema.

The development, which is being funded by Legal & General, should be completed by September. Property developer Stoford is carrying out the work.

Councillor Khurshid Ahmed, cabinet member for regeneration, said: "Dudley Council is committed to investing in our town centres and welcomes private developers who are inspired by Dudley's continuing regeneration to bring new builds, new business and new jobs to the borough.

Corridor

"Following the recent completion of the £6.7m regeneration of Dudley town centre, this development is a further demonstration of ongoing developer and investor confidence in the town.

"Stoford's development at Castlegate links with our tourism corridor, and will not only bring jobs to the area but will further add to the visitor offer to people spending time at one of the town's popular tourist attractions."

Dominic Stokes, director at Stoford, said: "Dudley is in the midst of a period of major regeneration.

"The new scheme will support the continued development of the town, benefiting visitors, residents and those that work in the area.

"The next few years will see a considerable amount of investment in the town and the final plot on Castle Drive will prove a fantastic opportunity for a new restaurant looking to take advantage of this."

Stoford has been involved in two other developments in Castlegate including the 63-bed Premier Inn and a two-storey office scheme at Castlegate Business Park for the Staffordshire and West Midlands Probation Trust.

Bubbly Sprout celebrates birthday

Celebrations for Bornean orang utan Sprout's fifth birthday at Dudley Zoo

IT'S been a week of birthdays at Dudley Zoo.

First Inca the Asiatic bear was given underfloor heating for her 36th birthday. Sprout the Bornean orang utan was then treated to a playtime with bubbles for her fifth birthday.

Keeper Jodie Dryden said: "She was so intrigued watching them that when one landed on her hand, she sat stock-still staring at it until it popped. "Just like a typical five-year-old, Sprout loves playing so we thought for her birthday we'd treat her to the bubbles and see what she made of them.

"But she was soon stretching out trying to scoop them up in her hand and even tried to catch a few in her mouth – it was very amusing to watch."

Sprout has rapidly become a visitors' favourite at the zoo. She made the headlines in October when she was snapped planting an upside down kiss on her mother Jazz. Asiatic black bear Inca turned 36 on March 29, more than 10 years older than the species is expected to live out in the wild.

The zoo prepared a birthday surprise for her – underfloor heating in the outdoor area of her enclosure.

Section leader Jay Haywood said: "She's definitely slowing down now, but she is the official title holder for the oldest Asiatic black bear in Europe after all."

Praise from inspectors over adult education

ADULT learning in Dudley has received a glowing report from Ofsted with many areas highlighted as good or excellent.

Inspectors from Ofsted visited in March and found that services overall were good and highlighted areas of excellence.

More than 6,000 people sign up to adult learner courses run by Dudley Council each year.

The inspectors found that managers and tutors were working effectively to provide learning opportunities for priority groups of learners and that a wide variety of courses are available including courses that lead to recognised qualifications.

Flourish

Alan Lunt, strategic director for the place directorate at Dudley Council, said: "We're pleased that our hard work has been recognised in this way.

"It shows that people flourish through the range of courses offered through the service.

"We are committed to offering a good, wide variety of learning opportunities for people not just to help them learn and gain qualifications but also to learn new skills for employment."

Hundreds of courses are available for people to sign up to including leisure-focussed classes in art and craft and health and well-being.

People can also sign up to academic courses including IT, English and maths, through to the vocational such as accounting and construction.

Bishop in new public body role

THE Bishop of Dudley has been appointed to a new role in a public body.

The Rt Rev Graham Usher has been named as a member of the Human Tissue Authority by the Health Secretary.

He and four other new Authority Members will scrutinise the HTA – the regulator for human tissue and organs.

The Bishop said: "I am looking forward to contributing to the work of the Human Tissue Authority which will build on an earlier role I had with the Newcastle Biomedicine Biobank when I was a parish priest in the north east.

"I hope my experience of Christian ethics will be a useful voice when collaborating about complex questions and maintaining dignity, consent and trust around the use of human tissue in research and transplantation."

Developer pulls out of proposal

PLANS for 12 homes near the Wrens Nest Nature Reserve in Dudley will not go ahead as the scheme was withdrawn.

Developer RA Investments had proposed building the dozen new properties on a former council maintenance site on Meadow Road.

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Lottery bid to restore art tribute to Churchill

A £100,000 funding bid to restore a tribute to wartime leader Sir Winston Churchill and return it to Dudley town centre has been launched.

Civic leaders want to bring back the stained glass mosaic, which once formed the centrepiece of the town's original Churchill Precinct but has not been seen since being removed in 1991.

Dudley Council has submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. If successful, the cash would be used to restore the artwork back to its former glory so it can take centre stage in the shopping centre which bears the former Prime Minister's name.

The campaign was launched last year by Dudley North MP Ian Austin and was backed by Churchill's grandson Sir Nicholas Soames when he visited the town to mark 50 years since the great leader's death. The MP has been working closely with council bosses and culture groups to put a bid together.

The Heritage Lottery Fund would provide £99,000 towards the project, with £4,000 from Dudley Council.

Mr Austin welcomed the fact the artwork was a step closer to returning to the town centre after 26 years away. He said: "Everyone who grew up in Dudley will remember the magnificent glass memorial to Winston Churchill."

The mosaic formed the centrepiece of the shopping centre for more than 20 years. It consisted of 17 panels which stretched across a section of the precinct.

It was designed by world-renowned artist Edward Bainbridge Copnall and was unveiled in 1969. The memorial was taken down after vandal attacks and weather damage took their toll leaving parts of it in pieces.

Checks made to railway bridge

CHECKS will be carried out to see if a railway bridge in Stourbridge needs to be replaced.

The bridge, which runs over the tracks at Parkfields Road, will be closed to traffic between April 15 and 17 as investigative works are carried out.

Network Rail said assessments would be made regarding the possibility of replacing the bridge, which is close to Stourbridge Town station.

Single-file traffic runs over the bridge into Vauxhall Road but access will be blocked for those three days.

Homes to replace pub given backing

A KINGSWINFORD pub will be knocked down to make way for new homes. Dudley Council has given plans to demolish the Summerhouse on The Portway the go-ahead to allow 14 homes to be built in its place.

Renewed plea over library volunteers

Hagley Library is seeking volunteers

A FRESH appeal has been made for more volunteers to help run a village library which was saved from closure.

Hagley Parish Council stepped in to take over responsibility for the Hagley Library's running and management costs around 18 months ago.

There had been fears the library could shut and be replaced with a mobile service as part of Worcestershire County Council plans for £1.9 million of cuts over the next three years.

Residents and councillors were opposed to the proposals and wanted to ensure the library remained open for the community. An agreement was made between the parish and county councils to secure its future. Now a fresh appeal for extra helpers to lend a hand in the library has been launched.

Parish council chairman Steve Colella, who described the library service as 'essential' said: "The future of Hagley Library is now more assured following the signing of an agreement between Hagley Parish Council and Worcestershire County Council.

"This gives the library support for the building from the parish council while the county council remain responsible for staff, IT and books."

The county council review had looked at different options including shutting the library, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2012, and replacing it with a mobile service.

Changes are also being made to Bewdley Library as part of the review. It will be combined with a new medical centre due to be built in Dog Lane.

Anyone interested in volunteering at Hagley Library is asked to call 01905 822722 or email KidderminsterLib@worcestershire.gov.uk

100 legal highs are seized in shop raid

MORE than 100 'legal highs' that have caused young people to suffer 'significant health issues' have been seized by police in a joint operation with trading standards.

It followed reports that new psychoactive substances (NPS) were being sold from a shop in Dudley, causing young people to suffer significant health issues.

Officers visited the premises, secured the building and carried out a search that led to the seizure of more than 100 products which are now due to be tested to identify exactly what they contain.

The proprietor is due to be interviewed by police in the near future. Officers carried out the crackdown at the shop last Friday, but the force would not reveal any more details about the raid.

Chief Inspector Simon Inglis, West Midlands Police lead for drugs, said: "Even though these products are not yet banned under criminal law, there is significant evidence to show that these so-called 'legal highs' are a significant risk to public health.

Roulette

"We will continue to work with our partners to remove these dangerous products from the streets.

"Those people who take them are playing Russian roulette with their lives and we need the public to understand the danger they pose.

"Research shows that a proportion of these products actually contain controlled drugs and if they are found in these products seized today the shop owners will face prosecution."

The blitz in Dudley follows a region-wide operation to combat the sale of legal highs. At the end of January, 70 shops were visited in towns and cities across the region.

Trading Standards officials seized 298 legal highs in the joint operation with West Midlands Police.

In Wolverhampton trading standards officials seized 40 substances, while in Walsall 228 NPS packets were confiscated, with 20 removed from shelves across Sandwell.

NPS mimic the effect of illegal drugs.

Currently, they are chemically different enough to avoid being classified as illegal substances under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

However, the law is due to change this month so police will be able to seize the products and arrest anyone suspected of supplying them.

Chance to enjoy trip Bywater

Ken Bywater, who has volunteered to take over the running of The Blackcountry Man passenger boat

A HISTORIC narrowboat will be back on the Midland waterways with a new operator at the helm for the season.

The Blackcountry Man takes people out on trips from its base at Stourbridge's Bonded Warehouse.

Day trips to Kinver, music and comedy nights and Christmas journeys to see Santa are among those on offer.

Ken Bywater has taken over as the operator of the boat which helps raise money towards the preservation and promotion of the waterways. The 70ft-long boat has had a £5,000 revamp and been off the water since October after the previous operator stood down from running trips.

Mr Bywater, aged 63, retired last year after 45 years in the motor trade including working at a Nissan car dealership. But he said he was keen to develop his interest in the waterways having owned his own motor boat moored on the River Severn.

"I'm really excited and looking forward to it," said Mr Bywater, from Amblecote."It is a great boat in really good condition with a connection to the Black Country."

Trips take place from April 9. A number of live music nights aboard the boat and the return of the fish and chip supper evenings are also planned on Fridays.

Call 01384 375912 for details.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Half-term sports camp for children

YOUNGSTERS can get active and make new friends at a half-term sports camp.

The Aspire Sports Active Camp will take place during the Whitsun holiday at Hagley High School in Brake Lane.

A host of activities will be on offer along with refreshments and chill out zones.

Four days can be booked for a total of £56 before May 13. The activity week will run between May 31 and through to June 3.

Visit www.aspire-sports.co.uk for more information.

Mary, 80, hits the heights for charity

AN 80-year-old campaigner helped to raise hundreds of pounds for good causes after completing an abseil down Dudley Castle.

Mary Law, of Wordsley, took part alongside dozens of other people, managing the 100ft descent down the 11th century castle walls.

She managed to bring in £225.63 for the Stroke Association.

She also scaled the heights in support of the Mesothelioma UK charity.

She supports the charity following the death of her son Roy Shipley at the age of 51 in 2010.

Cash is still being counted but she is hopeful of raising around £500.

"I have to say a big thank you to everyone who has donated money," she said.

Work to improve flow of water into pool

WORK is being carried out to improve a natural water system in a Dudley park.

De-silting work is taking place to improve the flow of a brook into a pool at Sedgley Hall Farm Park.

Large mounds of pool sediments have removed from the pond and fenced off to dry out along a path in the park while work takes place.

The work will help to improve the water quality for local pond and wildlife.

Bric-a-brac sale staged at church

A BRIC-a-brac sale is taking place at a Dudley church next weekend.

It will be held at Saint Peter's Church in Upper Gornal on April 16 from 10am until noon.

It will raise money for the church's funds. Refreshments will also be available.

Soul night at venue

DUDLEY Town Hall holds a Motown and club soul night next week.

The show Friday, April 15 will feature hit sounds played by DJs, creating a party atmosphere at the venue.

The event starts at 8pm and tickets cost £15. To book call 01384 812812 or 0870 320 7000.

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THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

MORE things misheard in youth. A reader who did her teaching practice 40 years ago at an infant school in a road called Beehive Lane recalls the discovery that some of the little kids didn't know the Lord's Prayer. They were found to be chanting: "Our Father which art in Heaven, Hello Beehive Lane."

WITH less than three months to go to the EU referendum, I wonder how long it will be before somebody in Whitehall or Brussels tells us that, under some tiny and well-hidden sub-section of EU law, the result of our voting will be advisory rather than mandatory? Just a hunch . . .

BRILLIANT locations, fabulous lighting, useless plot based on improbably Freudian cobblers. Maigret (ITV), starring Rowan Atkinson, would have been greatly improved by putting Inspecteur Bean on case.

THERE is nothing in the 2015 Conservative Manifesto about converting all primary schools into academies. The closest it gets is the pledge to "Turn every failing or coasting secondary school into an academy." Jeremy Corbyn hasn't exactly set the nation alight with his choice of policies so far but in fighting this imposition of power from the top-down, he may be on to a winner. It is a simple matter of honesty. If it isn't in the manifesto, it shouldn't be on the agenda.

NATIONAL treasure John Humphrys says he cannot understand people indulging in the "idiocies" of Twitter and Facebook. Come off it, John. Social-media junkies simply want to be like you. They want to be famous. They want to impress their "friends" and "followers," even though they go days on end without a single viewing. Saddest of all are not the kids but those middle-aged underachievers who are desperate to show off their intellectual prowess. I know one who publishes a list online of all the books he has read. Don't scoff, John. Show some pity.

I ONCE interviewed Humphrys. He described his famously skinny frame thus: "You'll find more fat on a seagull's lip."

AS Ireland commemorates the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising, I wonder what those heroic, doomed young revolutionaries of 1916 would make of their homeland today. They were romantics and idealists, teachers and poets. They dreamed of an idyllic, pastoral, Gaelic nation, a land of legend and martyrs, blessed by the blood of its heroes and run by the will of the people, not by foreigners in London. Today's Ireland, thoroughly immersed in the EU, is subject not to diktat from Whitehall but to diktat from Brussels.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Bosses 'confident' of handling births

SANDWELL health bosses have declared they were 'confident' their maternity services could take dozens of extra births a year to help easy the pressure on Walsall's failing hospital.

It was revealed last week that up to 200 expectant mothers a year are set to be told they cannot have their babies delivered at Walsall Manor Hospital and will instead be redirected to services in Sandwell and Dudley.

Elaine Newell, director of midwifery for Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, said: "We have been talking to Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust for some time and are pleased to be able to support the Trust in offering access to our maternity service for women from the Walsall area, or from parts of Sandwell who historically look to the Manor. We are very confident that we have the right capacity to continue to provide our high standards of care in our midwifery services and birthing facilities."

The talks are in the early stages and it has not been confirmed what areas will be effected or how the mothers will be divided between Sandwell's Midwifery Unit or Dudley's Russells Hall Hospital. Paul Clark, chief executive for Dudley Group NHS Foundation Group, said: "We can confirm the Trust has been in discussion with Walsall CCG and Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust regarding maternity provision.

"These discussions are still in the early stages.

"We are unable to provide any more detail."

New name plan in bid to save Hippodrome

By Andrew Turton

CAMPAIGNERS are encouraging the whole Black Country to get behind the fight to save Dudley Hippodrome – with plans to potentially re-name the venue.

They have tabled plans to called the historic theatre The Black Country Hippodrome should they succeed in securing its future.

Plans have yet to be finalised but campaigners want people to see the Castle Hill landmark as a Black Country attraction.

Further talks have been held between the campaigners and Dudley Council after it emerged a proposal to save the theatre 'lacks critical information'.

The Friends of Dudley Hippodrome had worked with a new group which had come forward featuring industry experts. A business plan submitted at the end of last year was deemed 'extremely unrealistic' according to independent assessors.

Ideas

Revised plans were submitted in February in a bid to address some of the concerns raised.

And the name change is among the ideas to bolster its bid across the wider Black Country.

Friends group chairman Gordon Downing said the venue would be known as Dudley Hippodrome initially but this could change to help bring in revenue.

"The name Black Country Hippodrome was put forward to get it more well-known in a wider area," he said. "We had further talks with the council and assessor. We are looking at things we can do differently."

Campaigner Dave Mundon, who worked with the group on the idea, said: "My personal view is it would help put the Black Country on the market more."

Dudley Council says it has been prepared to hold more talks with the group but will continue to pursue plans to demolish the venue.

The council paid £750 to assessors FGM Consulting for an analysis of the steering group's business plan.

War memorial takes pride of place

From left, Councillor Keiran Casey and Don Davies and Harry Brookes from the Woodsetton Charitable Trust Memorial at

THE finishing touches have been put in place for Woodsetton War Memorial which has now been moved to the 'heart of the community'.

The memorial has been relocated from behind a fence on nearby church ground in Swan Village, to a more public area of open space opposite the Bramford pub at the crossroads of Parkes Hall Lane and Tipton Road, allowing services to be held on the three-quarter acre site.

It also has a new information board and Union Flag pole installed to remember the 30 fallen heroes of the First World War. The work has cost £35,000, with funding made possible through Heritage Lottery Fund, Ibstock Carey International and Dudley Council. The information board details the soldiers' rank, date of birth, date of death and where they are buried along with other information. The names include six men from Woodsetton, three from Parkes Hall and 21 from Swan Village.

Research for the board was carried out by High Arcal Secondary School pupils with the help of local historian Andrew Johnson. Woodsetton Charitable Trust has been instrumental in helping get the funding for the project.

Councillor Keiran Casey said: "I think the memorial looks fantastic in its new location, taking pride of place at the heart of our community.

"This board gives us a chance to learn more about the brave people from Woodsetton who went and fought to uphold our great values and who paid the ultimate sacrifice."

Landmark office block set for £14m homes plan

DUDLEY'S landmark Falcon House office block is to be turned into 141 flats in a £14 million regeneration project.

It has been bought by a 29-year-old developer from Nottingham, Arran Bailey, and his ALB Black Country Properties company, who are now seeking permission from Dudley Council for the redevelopment plan.

Mr Bailey wants to convert the 88,000 sq ft, eight storey building into 65 one-bedroom and 76 two-bed apartments. It follows the collapse of plans to demolish Falcon House for a supermarket complex, including a café and petrol station.

The site had been owned by property specialist Prosperity, as part of its £100 million buy-to-let investment portfolio. Mr Bailey's ALB Black Country bought it shortly before it was due to go up for auction.

Mr Bailey, managing director of ALB Black Country, said: "The local area has been in need of new housing developments, and we are excited to play a big part in the area's regeneration."

Falcon House, based in The Minories, dates back to the 1960s, and was earmarked as a target for redevelopment by the council several years ago.

Leeds architects firm Headoffice3 has designed the development and will be managing the works to complete in 2017. Its chief executive Glen Harding said: "We believe this project will genuinely improve the local demographics and breathe new life into a tired block."

Himley venue for wedding open day

COUPLES planning to tie the knot can receive specialist help on making their special day perfect.

An open day takes place at Himley Hall – one of the Midlands' most historic wedding venues – on Sunday, April 17 from 11am to 4pm. Admission is free.

The venue comes complete with 1930s-style bespoke lighting, period décor and stylish soft furnishings. The beautifully refurbished North Wing, which once housed the Earl of Dudley's swimming pool and cinema, is now an elegant art-deco style banqueting suite and lounge bar.

Wedding co-ordinators and the catering team will be on hand to offer advice, along with registrars from the Staffordshire Registration Service. Call 01384 817 817.

A musical journey through the decades

NOSTALGIC music show All Our Yesterdays is coming to Dudley Town Hall. The musical aims to take the audience on a journey through the sounds of the 1950s, 60s and 70s.

Tickets for the 2pm performance on May 10 cost £11. Call 01384 812812.

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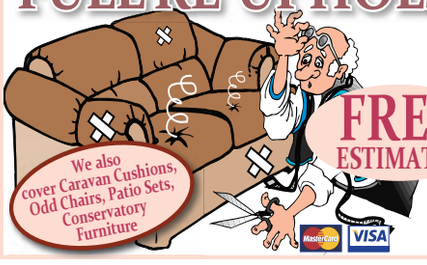

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Doctor calls time on his profession of 32 years

A DOCTOR who is also a badminton champion has retired after 32 years of service.

Dr William Trevor Hampson, known as Trevor, worked his last day at Northway Medical Centre, Alderwood Precinct, Dudley, last Thursday.

The 61-year-old began his career in Birmingham in 1974 where he continued with his medical training. Graduating in 1979 he then went on to work at all the hospitals around the Dudley area, including the old Burton Road and Wordsley Hospitals.

Mr Hampson, of Seisdon, began working for Northway Medical Centre in February 1984, becoming a partner in the surgery 17 years later.

Dr Hampson, a father-of-two, said: "I've seen so many changes over the years. The biggest one to affect the surgery was the building of a million pounds purpose-built surgery that revolutionised the care that we could offer as well as making the surgery a spacious, happier place to work.

"When I started it was small, two-man operation, and we built it up to one of the top performing practices in Dudley."

Dr Hampson celebrated his many years of service with staff and patients at the surgery in a special party on his final day at work. Sarah Bytheway, who also works at the surgery said: "He will be greatly missed."

Dr Hampson, who plays badminton internationally at Masters level, will compete at the Yonex Championship and the European championship in Slovenia in September.

Bosses in pledge over artefacts

BOSSES at Dudley Council have said they are committed to ensuring artefacts and paintings from the town's museum and art gallery will remain on public display once it closes.

The museum building on Priory Street is being axed due to budget cuts. It is expected to close later this year.

Many items on display are expected to move to the Dudley Archives and Local History Centre in Tipton Road but talks are taking place about where other pieces will be displayed.

Alan Lunt, strategic director for the place directorate at Dudley Council, said: "We are continuing to look at options to display these important collections in alternative venues to ensure they remain on display to the public."

Old classmates in reunion date

FORMER pupils of High Park School in Wollaston can get together for a reunion next month. It takes place on May 21 at 7.30pm.

For more information call Andy Houston on 07913989715.

Can-tastic film promotion in store

The stand features hundreds of cans

SUPERMARKET staff were fizzing with creativity after putting together a superhero call sign made from drinks cans.

Hundreds of Coca Cola cans were used to make the combined Batman and Superman logos, which stands 20 cans high at the Tesco store in Stourbridge.

The stand was created by the store ahead of the release of the Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice film.

It was crafted by the store's Coca Cola representative during their night shift. Their creative juices were flowing when they set about making this design, using a mixture of red, black and grey colours of the packaging to draw up the shapes of the symbols.

The red represents Superman and black for Batman.

Accurate

It is reminiscent of how pictures were made on old computers using square pixels, where each drinks pack has a rectangular shape.

It seems some planning had gone into the stand, where the designer had to take into consideration the shape of the cans and space used to create an accurate design. The film it celebrates, Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice, was released in cinemas across the UK on March 25.

It is a follow-up to 2013's Man of Steel and is the second instalment in the DC Extended Universe.

Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice is the first live-action film that features Batman and Superman together in one film, as well as the first theatrical film to feature live-action portrayals of Wonder Woman, Aquaman, Cyborg and the Flash.

Council cuts costs on housing repairs

COUNCIL bosses in Dudley say they have spent tens of thousands of pounds less than expected on bringing empty homes back up to scratch – in reply to claims of 'throwing money' at idle properties.

Repairs to nine empty homes in the borough were originally expected to cost £230,000 but Dudley Council said the work had been completed for £88,000 following a review into how the works were being carried out.

All the properties have now been let.

Millions of pounds are spent every year on empty houses across the Dudley borough.

And the cash-strapped council, which must save £20 million over three years, has been warned it must continue to save money and change the way it operates on costly empty properties.

Some £17 million was spent on empty homes during 2014/15. The work included 'necessary maintenance' such as electricity tests, rewiring, plastering and clearing gardens.

Ignored

There are currently 617 empty homes in Dudley, although 300 of those are already allocated or being advertised.

Councillor Elaine Taylor, a member of the council's place scrutiny committee, said some properties had been ignored for too long. She said they had been left to fall into a poor state of repair, meaning they were costing more to refurbish now.

"We have to concede that it is not cost-effective to just throw money at these when clearly they will never generate a return," she said.

"I truly believe the way forward would be to view each property with a criteria costed and analysed as to renovate to let as council affordable housing or sell to a private investor."

Fellow scrutiny committee member, Councillor Dean Perks, said refurbishing properties to a high standard was 'unachievable' and that the council should do only the bare minimum needed for them to be rented out.

Housing boss Councillor Gaye Partridge said: "There is further work planned to determine how best to invest in our housing stock in a way that gives good value and good quality.

"I am confident that we will see a continued trend towards less empty homes in the future," she added.

Roll up for bowls club open day

Crystal Bowls Club chairman Ann Darby gets ready for the open day at Stevens Park, Wollescote

A BOWLS club is holding an open day as it marks its 21st anniversary. Members of Lye and Wollescote Bowls Club has added cause for celebration after two new changing rooms were opened.

The club started life playing in the Crystal Leisure Centre in Stourbridge, before support from Dudley Council enabled it to move outdoors.

The club has spent nearly two decades in the stunning surrounds of Wollescote's Stevens Park and Grade II-listed Wollescote Hall.

The open day takes place on April 16 from 11am to 4pm.

Treasurer John Darby is married to club chairman Ann, who was one of the club's founder members back in 1995.

Mr Darby said: "One of our former members, the late Eddie Palmer, persuaded Dudley Council to convert what was the lawn tennis club to a six rink full bowling ground back in 1995. "We played there for around six years then in 2002 we built our first pavilion thanks to a grant from the council.

"At the moment we have 41 members for the current season."

"The numbers have gradually declined since then and we're trying to boost them again now."

Wollescote Hall was given to the people of Lye and Wollescote by Ernest Stevens in 1930.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Consultation on school now ends

A PUBLIC consultation about the future of Coseley School has now finished. The consultation, which began in February, came to an end at midnight on Tuesday.

The fate of the school, which has 557 pupils, is expected to be decided by council bosses next month.

Parents and pupils staged public protests outside council meetings and quizzed leaders during debates over the issue of the proposed closure.

Around 1,900 parents have also signed a petition set up by angry parent Michaela Garbett, of Roseville.

Omma n chain entertainment

ENTERTAINER and broadcaster Billy Spake Mon hosts a night of live music in Tipton this weekend.

Mr Spake Mon, real name Brian Dakin, presents the Omma n Chain Show at Brook Street Community Centre from 7.30pm on Saturday (April 9).

It will feature local bands and performers, among them the band Missing Link and Wednesbury duo So It Goes, as well as solo singer songwriter John Langford and comedic magician Ron Popple.

Tickets are £5. Call 0121 557 0371.

Store workers in sporty fundraisers

SAINSBURY'S staff in the Dudley borough got behind Sport Relief 2016 – raising £7,850 for the charity.

Amblecote store colleagues helped to raise £4,761 through a sponsored walk, a bleep-test, quizzes, raffles and a tombola. A Zumbathon and visits from Disney's Mickey, Minnie, Elsa and Olaf helped to boost funds.

Merry Hill store staff raised £3,089 with a bake-off, leg wax and Peppa Pig. They also took part in a Sport Relief Mile at the Dell Stadium.

Toilets could become taxi booking office

DISUSED public toilets in Stourbridge could be converted into a booking office for a taxi company.

A change of use proposal proposal for the public convenience in Health Lane, Oldswinford has been submitted to Dudley Council.

A report included as part of the planning package states: "The building would be used purely as a booking office and would be staffed 24 hours a day by no more than one member of staff any one time."

Meeting with police

RESIDENTS in Brierley Hill are invited to a police forum on May 16.

The public meeting will take place at Nine Locks Community Centre in Hill Street from 6-7pm.

The Brierley Hill police team will be on hand to talk to residents about any concerns they might have.

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It's been a crazy few months for Cloudy2Clear Windows. The company which specialises in repairing windows which are steamed up, broken or damaged by replacing the panes – not the frames has grown rapidly as homeowners take advantage of their services.

Managing Director Brian Stanley feels that it's all about service. 'Our product is simple. If your double glazing is misted up we can replace the glass at a fraction of the cost of a new window, in any type of frame, and with a new 5 year guarantee. But it's not just about saving people money, although that obviously helps. Many tradespeople have struggled since last year and I honestly feel that during the good times a minority perhaps didn't focus on customer care as much as they should have done.

We make sure we turn up when we say we will, do the job the customer requires and leave their house as clean as a whistle. I often get comments back from customers on how they really didn't expect that sort of service which, in a way, is very sad for the service industry as a whole.'

Cloudy2Clear service Wolverhampton and the surrounding area and Brian is finding that his approach is a major factor in his success. 'The truth is that it's not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people I've done work for, which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated.'

So, if your windows are steamed up, broken or damaged give Brian a call for a free quotation on **0800 61 21 118** and he'll be happy to help!

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IN MY VIEW
with Mark Andrews

Selfie with hijacker is just simply 'plane' daft

WE'VE all been there. You're on a nice peaceful flight on the way to your holiday in the sun, when some whack-job in Curly Watts specs tells you he's got dynamite in his vest and is going to blow the plane up.

So naturally, the first thing that comes into your mind is to ask the madman if he would awfully mind posing with you for a selfie.

At least that is what Ben Innes from Leeds chose to do after the plane he was travelling on was hijacked

He didn't even use it to cancel his hotel booking. Instead, grinning like a deranged Cheshire Cat, he had his photograph taken by the lunatic threatening to blow the plane up, putting the lives of all the fellow passengers in imminent danger.

Doesn't that tell you all you need to know about the narcissistic, fame-obsessed world of people who live their lives on so-called social media?

And it isn't even a proper selfie. While I wouldn't describe myself as a keen purveyor of the medium, it is my understanding that a selfie has to be taken by the person in the picture.

And as we can see from the images which have been plastered all around the world over the past week, both his hands are clearly visible.

So he either asked Curly if he would kindly take his hand off his suicide belt for a moment and hold the camera, which seems a tad unlikely, or he roped somebody else in to take the picture. What a pair of clowns.

Innes said he went through a "thorough thought process", and wanted to show the hijacker he was human. But I'm really not convinced. Far from reassuring the hijacker, I think such behaviour would freak anybody out. The likelihood is the thought "this guy's an even bigger weirdo than me".

Thankfully, it turned out that the hijacker was not carrying any explosives, and the passengers escaped unharmed. But it could have been very different.

Ben Innes, by the way, is a health-and-safety auditor.

Remember this next time you hear about children being told to wear goggles for conkers, bus drivers who have to wear high-visibility jackets, or builders who are not allowed to climb ladders.

❒❒❒

ON Friday, 40 members of the public wore Piers Morgan masks and boarded the giant DY Eye Ferris wheel in Dudley.

Some may recall the renowned sage had described the wheel as offering a horrible view.

"I can't think of a grimmer panorama than Dudley at 7.37 in the morning," said the great man.

I certainly can't think of a grimmer one than last Friday.

Ivan and Yvonne have fun in a photo booth

Ivan Partridge in hospital with devoted wife Yvonne

Ivan with his granchildren Daniyal and Harley

Courageous Ivan loses cancer battle

Cancer patient Ivan Partridge will leave a fundraising legacy following his death at the age of 55. **ANDY TURTON** reports

AN inspirational cancer sufferer who had kickstarted a charity fundraising effort for a hospice has died aged 55.

Ivan Partridge was diagnosed last year with a rare form of melanoma leading to him needing major facial surgery.

He had been taken into Stourbridge's Mary Stevens Hospice within the last fortnight and offered revolutionary treatment.

Last week, The Chronicle told how he was facing the future with a smile thanks to his fundraising efforts. However, the inspirational company director has since lost his courageous fight against the disease.

Since his diagnosis Mr Partridge, from Quarry Bank, had vowed to help raise money for Mary Stevens Hospice.

Family

Charity nights, collections and a mammoth bike ride are all helping towards bringing in cash.

And his family say the fundraising efforts will continue in his name giving them a great deal of comfort as they grieve.

His wife Yvonne, 55, said: "He fought to be get better. He wanted to carry on. He didn't want to die.

"But I know he will be with us on his bike. It has been a really big help to know that the fundraising will carry on."

Initially, Mr Partridge visited doctors complaining over a blocked nose and having an operation to remove nasal polyps. But doctors later broke the news he had a rare strain of melanoma and faced major facial surgery.

The family celebrates on Ivan and Yvonne's wedding day

The couple wed at Dudley Register Office

Donations

The couple married last August at Dudley Register Office at Priory Hall and decided to raise money for the hospice by having donations instead of wedding gifts.

A funding club night was also held.

Just last week Mr Partridge said of the fundraising efforts: "It has give me something to focus on. You just have to live for every day."

He also thanked his family for their support including daughter Rebecca, 23, and 18-month-old grandson Daniyal, and step-daughter Emma, 28, and her partner Michael, and Emma's children Harley, four, and 11-month-old Hudson, and step-son Aaron, 23.

Family friend Richard Stafford has organised a bike ride to help push the cash total past £10,000. In June, Mr Stafford will be taking on a charity bike ride from Land's End to John O' Groats.

Money raised will also be split with a charity supporting motor neurone disease sufferers after his friend Robert Owen was diagnosed with the condition.

Mr Stafford said: "The bike ride will be in Ivan's memory too. It is so sad."

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Putin angle a desperate move by 'Project Fear'

AMBER Rudd MP has found a new angle for 'Project Fear' as the 'insiders' get ever more desperate and inventive in their battle of wits.

She tells us that leaving the EU could add £500 million to UK energy bills because President Putin 'might hijack our energy security as a political pawn to bring Europe to its knees'. Maybe she should go away and think about that for a minute.

If she is right then being in the EU will be more harmful to us than being out. If Mr Putin does decide to 'attack' Europe by massively raising gas and oil prices, as she claims, then won't we be better off in a free market where we can find other suppliers or come to a separate agreement with Russia over pricing?

Using her logic, if he imposes these rises on the EU then the higher prices will apply whether we are in or out.

To imply that he will raise our fuel prices in isolation, while leaving the rest of the EU alone, is an obvious nonsense particularly if he is doing it, as she claims, to 'bring Europe to its knees'.

What has driven up energy costs, with a detrimental effect to both domestic and industrial energy bills, is the EU's 2008 Climate Change Act, dubbed 'the most expensive piece of legislation in British history', which the Government themselves calculate will cost the UK taxpayer £720 billion (at current prices) by 2050. Outside the EU this Act could be repealed and costs massively reduced as a consequence.

Far from being worse off outside the EU, as Ms Rudd claims, the facts show quite the reverse.

G WILSON
Stourbridge

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST
Dudley Chronicle,
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EMAIL
dudley.chrons@expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Someone funds the terrorists

WITH the tragic and heart-tugging events we have witnessed in Brussels and formerly Paris, a lot has been said and written around who these perpetrators are, where they come from and so on.

They almost always seemed to be dressed in western style clothing, use western technology and have undoubtedly experienced western hospitality, and yet claim all westerners be infidels and targets – hypocrisy at its most extreme.

I recall Margaret Thatcher stating that once MI5 found who were funding the IRA it became easier to stifle their oxygen.

Someone somewhere with more money than sense is funding these killers.

Why can't the world's biggest nations discover who is paying the bill?

ISIS have been moulded groomed and bred with billions behind them, and yet no-one seemingly knows from where. This I find as hard to accept.

S HARRISON
West Bromwich

IDS no hero for the poor and disabled

SO Iain Duncan Smith has resigned. He says the proposed cuts put in the Budget by the Chancellor George Osborne were unfair to take it from the poor and disabled. Even Tory backbenchers didn't agree with it, hence the complete U-turn on this part of the Budget.

Don't feel any sympathy for IDS, he's the one who turfed out tenants from their homes where they had lived for decades when he brought in the hated bedroom tax.

IDS is the one who turfed out disabled people from their adapted homes because they had a spare room. This is the same person who has been to courts of appeal several times to try and overturn cases they have lost with the disabled.

He has spent £150,000 of tax payers money doing this and the now-new Secretary of State for work and pensions is carrying on with the appeals costing a further £50,000, this on the back of George Osborne giving the wealthy tax breaks. We shouldn't be surprised. This is a Government more severe than that of Margaret Thatcher.

This Tory Government seems hell bent on making cuts to the most poor and disabled people in this country. Even David Cameron's mother doesn't agree with him.

B WHITEHOUSE
Kingswinford

Hallé or nothing

AT the end of a concert by the Hallé Orchestra on Radio 3, the announcer gave a list of the towns they will be visiting. This would have included Dudley but Dudley Council has ceased funding an annual visit by the Hallé.

The council are now closing the museum, so another cultural activity will disappear from the scene. What next will this council cease to fund?

E CARELESS
Halesowen

So what did you expect?

WELL done Ian Austin for sticking up for Dudley and our DY-Eye tourist attraction against 'snobbish' critics. I am sick of people knocking it and moaning about the view. We are in the heart of the Black Country – what do they expect to see? The Manhattan Skyline? The rim of the Grand Canyon? Glacier National Park? I think it's great for Dudley and so do the local businesses.

M WILKES
Dudley

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North Street, before it was the heart of the city centre

Queen Square, with its wide thoroughfare

High Green, with St Peter's Church in distance, in 1837

Lichfield Street circa 1846, with its Tudor buildings

The corner of Peel Street and Salop Street circa 1870

The Old Barrel inn, in Wolverhampton, from the 1870s

Book offering a glimpse of everyday life from city's past, is no accident

PEOPLE knocked down on their way to work, falling from ladders and boilers exploding – just some of the bizarre accidents from the 19th century included in a new book.

MEMORY LANE

Report by Karl Aston

The publication is the work of Jane Smith, aged 69, from Perton, who has a keen interest in local history.

Three-and-a-half years ago someone asked her if there was anything apart from her usual area of expertise – Worfield in Shropshire – that she would like to study. She replied that she would like to study accidents and the seed of her book was sown. Her book is titled Accidents: Nineteenth Century Accidents In Wolverhampton, and Jane explained why she wanted to write it.

"Accidents happen to ordinary people, on an ordinary day, in an ordinary town," she said, "And when they do, the description of what happened is recorded and provides a snapshot of life as it was. It tells of people knocked down on their way to work, of cows stuck in shops, of steam boilers exploding. This is history up close – we are like eavesdroppers on people's lives."

The book on accidents in Wolverhampton is more than 500 pages long and is being stocked by Amazon.

She said: "My interest is not in the accident per se, but in the light the accident throws on everyday life. Such as the story of the lamplighter who was up a ladder lighting a gas lamp when the ladder was caught by a passing donkey cart. That is the story of a non-fatal accident which creates a strong visual image of a time gone by.

"Then there was Mrs Burrows, aged 70, minding her own business on Snow Hill in 1841 when two butchers from Birmingham were racing up the hill on their way home.

"One of them knocked Mrs Burrows over and killed her, but the riders weren't held to blame, the horse was, and a fine was duly placed on him or her."

The 19th century was a time of great change in manufacturing, transport and housing, said Jane, and with those changes came challenges, which often translated into people making mistakes. Jane said: "Sometimes people didn't understand the technology, they took risks, such as at Rough Hills Pit in 1861, when the head engineer was notified that there was a leak in a boiler.

"But rather than taking the boiler out of service for a proper repair, the head engineer fills the crack with wooden wedges and hemp and the boiler is put back into work. The explosion kills two men immediately.

Accidents: Nineteenth Century Accidents In Wolverhampton is published by Share Our Past Ltd and is available for £17.50.

Jane Smith, of Perton, with her book on accidents in Wolverhampton

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Eye is wheely good as Bishop gives blessing

The Bishop of Dudley Graham Usher prepares to go for a spin on the DY Eye wheel in Dudley

THE Bishop of Dudley has taken on ride on DY Eye – and given his blessing to the under-fire Ferris wheel.

The Rt Rev Graham Usher was joined by a group of local clergy for a ride on the 115ft wheel, and afterwards hailed it as 'fantastic'.

The attraction has been criticised by some local people and national journalists, including Piers Morgan – but the bishop has sprung to the big wheel's defence.

"The critics of the Dudley Eye need to come and experience the ride themselves and I think they will be duly converted," he said. "It is a great attraction that offers fantastic views of the Black Country and further afield, such as Staffordshire and Shropshire.

"I wasn't impressed when I heard the Dudley wheel was being described by some as the 'worst tourist attraction in England'.

"It is ridiculous what some people have said about the ride. They have probably never been to Dudley."

Thousands of people have already paid a visit to the Dudley Eye, which has attracted nationwide interest.

An American country music star has even leaped to Dudley's defence following a visit to the town.

Stacia Watkins said she was stunned to hear about the flak Dudley had received over the wheel. The singer from Nashville, Tennessee, took a trip on the wheel as she was in the Black Country to perform in Stourbridge.

Stacia said:"Dudley has so much history and so much past, we in America would love that. The people of Dudley and everyone I met in the Black Country were really proud people. So I think Piers Morgan needs to either put up or shut up and get on the eye."

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Housing plan at club

A SOCIAL club in Dudley could be knocked down to make way for new homes, if plans lodged with council chiefs are given the go-ahead.

Developers want to demolish the Pensnett and Bromley Services Memorial Club in Bradley Street and create room to build eight semi-detached homes and one detached on the site.

An application to knock down the building has been submitted to planning officers at Dudley Council by MJR Services. A decision is expected in the coming weeks.

Dave makes the cut as principal film censor

HE grew up in Dudley and has fond memories of watching Chitty Chitty Bang Bang as a youngster at the town's Odeon Cinema.

Now David Austin, brother of Dudley North MP Ian Austin, watches films for a living in his role as Britain's chief censor.

The 52-year-old has recently taken up his post as the new director of the British Board of Film Classification.

He makes the final decision on the rating for every film released in the UK, and it is likely to be his signature that cinemagoers see on the screen shortly before the start of the movie.

His day-to-day work involves scrutinising every type of film imaginable. He is charged with running the rule over some of the most gruesome and bloody violence recorded but Mr Austin says the sights he sees now are tame in comparison to what he witnessed in his previous job.

Ex-diplomat David Austin

War

He spent 16 years working in the Foreign Office's Diplomatic Service, with one of his tasks being to help end war in the former Yugoslavia. That role – for which he received an OBE in 1999 – involved sitting at the table with Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic in an attempt to negotiate peace. Milosevic was later charged with genocide.

"I got shot at," he says, rather matter-of-factly. "The final straw came in 1998 when I was away in Kosovo for a month.

"My daughter asked my wife if I had died. That's when I knew it was time for a change."

Mr Austin joined the BBFC in 2003, initially as an examiner. "It was a lot safer, although there are similarities with my diplomatic work," he said. "I was still analysing and making recommendations."

In 2014 the BBFC classified 955 films released in UK cinemas but the organisation also runs the rule over content for other platforms, including DVD, Blu-Ray, Netflix, Amazon Prime and online streaming sites such as YouTube and Vevo.

"Today we are classifying fewer DVDs, but we still looked at between 8,500 and 9,000 in 2014," said the father of two, who now lives in West London.

"We are also now looking at a significant amount of content that will only be available online, which has certainly broadened our work."

The organisation has a staff of 42 and prides itself on being the public's trusted guide to what is suitable for each age category.

Attractions join forces to mark St George's Day

DUDLEY Castle is joining forces with the borough council to host St George's Day celebrations for the first time.

Dudley Council and Dudley Zoological Gardens will combine to mark the patron saint's day on April 23.

This is the first year the event will be held in partnership with the town's famous landmark.

The event will kick off at 3pm in the 11th century castle's courtyard with numerous activities on show.

In the morning, Dudley Market will also host events, with visitors able to meet creatures from the town zoo's animal encounters feature. Councillor Steve Waltho, Mayor of Dudley, said: "This is a first for us, and we're really excited to be working together with our neighbour to host this year's St George's Day.

"The medieval setting is the perfect location to celebrate the legend of St George and to attract people into the town centre.

"I hope people from across the borough come along and enjoy the day."

Derek Grove, zoo director, said: "We're delighted to be working alongside Dudley Council in celebrating St George's Day this year."

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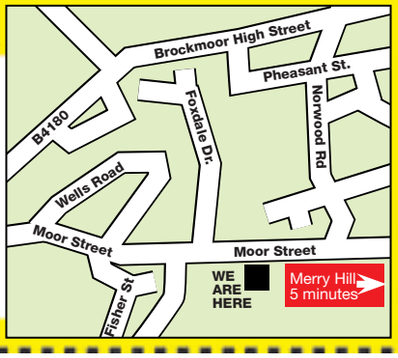

Business aiming for the sky with airships

The Lockheed Martin hybrid airship, one of two companies in talks with Straighline Aviation

A BUSINESS based at an airfield near Dudley aims to become the first in the world to operate a new generation of airships.

In two years' time Straightline Aviation says it will have a fleet of four to six hybrid airships flying passengers and freight in normally inaccessible areas of Africa, Canada and China.

But not over the Black Country or Staffordshire, although the offices at Wolverhampton Business Airport, at Bobbington, will remain the company's home as it grows.

Company bosses Mike Kendrick and Mark Dorey formerly ran Richard Branson's Virgin airship and hot air balloons business, while Mr Kendrick has become better known for his Mineseeker Foundation, which works to find and remove mines in Africa.

Helium

The pair are in advanced talks with the two companies currently developing the new airships, Hybrid Air Vehicles in the UK and US aviation giant Lockheed Martin, to become their first customer.

Both companies expect to have their airships ready to fly commercially in 2018. Filled with helium, the new airships use a combination of lighter-than-air, aircraft and helicopter technologies – hence the term 'hybrid'.

They can land on any piece of cleared ground or even on the water.

"These aircraft will transport cargo and passengers to previously inaccessible locations around the globe," said Mr Kendrick. "The first versions will carry up to 20 tons of freight, as well as passengers but they are scalable to many times that number.

As well as working in developing countries lacking modern transport networks, the airships would be ideal for oil and gas exploration companies working in inaccessible areas, he said.

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Fly-tippers cost thousands in clean-up bill

FLY-TIPPERS have been branded 'idiots' and 'scumbags' after Dudley Council revealed it had spent more than £10,000 cleaning its four worst-hit streets in just 12 months.

The authority spent £10,631 cleaning up the four roads last year – and received 820 complaints about fly-tipping throughout the borough.

Cradley and Wollescote councillor Richard Body, who represents one of the worst affected areas, said: "If more people started using cameras and more culprits started getting caught these idiots would think twice about fly-tipping. They are scumbags.

"People can get fined up to £250 for fly-tipping but I would like to see that penalty double."

The worst-hit streets were Hall Street in Dudley, Oak Lane in Kingswinford, Mears Coppice in Quarry Bank and Foxcote Lane in Cradley.

Kingswinford North and Wall Heath Councillor Dave Tyler said: "There has been a problem for a number of years at Oak Lane. The council has put a lot of measures in place to stop fly-tipping. We have been very successful but the problem is we need to catch people who are dumping the waste.

"We obviously can't put officers down there all the time, although we have used CCTV in the past – which has been successful. We need public support as well."

There were 820 reports of fly-tipping in Dudley during 2014/15, up 12 per cent from 728 three years before.

Cost to the council to clear up fly-tipping across the borough in 2014/15 was £45,366 – rising from £35,339.

CCTV plan launched to tackle violence against taxi drivers

TAXIS in Dudley will have CCTV installed inside under plans to tackle child abuse and violence against drivers.

The move comes after a driver was attacked and left seriously injured in the street in Brierley Hill.

Mohammed Ahmed was badly beaten and was taken to hospital after the attack in Bell Street South on February 28.

Officials say the cameras would also boost safety in the wake of child sexual exploitation in other parts of the country. The cameras would also be used to capture those damaging taxis or making off without paying.

A consultation will be launched into the proposals. Dudley Council's taxi committee outlined a consultation into the policy at a meeting on Tuesday.

Dudley Private Hire and Taxi Association chairman Shaz Saleem said he was broadly in favour of the scheme, but wanted information on how it would be funded and who had control of the footage. "Having CCTV would protect drivers and customers and ensure safety," he said. "It would act as a deterrent to people.

Spying

"We have had drivers who have been abused, some of them have been hit, and some customers have been making off with paying. It is about safety. It is not a question of spying on people."

He added: "My main questions over it is who is funding it. Also will the council have access to the CCTV?"

Dudley Council's taxi committee chairman, Councillor Richard Body, said the consultation would discover more information on how to implement the policy.

Options will be explored to either force the compulsory fitting of CCTV, allowing it to be optional for drivers or scrapping the plan altogether. It is expected to report back within around three months.

The plans come as training is planned for borough cabbies to spot the signs of child exploitation by those customers using taxis.

Councillor Body said: "Cameras in taxis have worked in places like Rotherham and London.

"At the moment it will be a consultation looking into the issues and that way everyone can give their views."

Vets takes bow-wow after being named best in UK

Mayor Steve Waltho and Brian Hogan (Partner & Clinical Director where in Dudley) with border terrier Burt

A VETERINARY Practice from the Black Country has been named as the best in the UK.

Blacks Vets Dudley Hospital help every creature from poorly pooches to under the weather hamsters and has now topped the charts for the second year running in the competition run by the VetHelpDirect.com directory.

The Best UK Vets awarded is presented to the veterinary practice that has been given the most four or five star online reviews by their clients.

Blacks Vets in Dudley finished in first place, with branches of the practice in Lye, Sedgley, Oldbury and Quinton, following in second, third, fifth and eighth place respectively. Partner and clinical director Dr Brian Hogan, who was congratulated by Mayor of Dudley Councillor Steve Waltho, said: "We are overwhelmed to receive this award for a second time.

"This really matters to us because it is voted for by pet owners," he added

"As you can imagine to have such a high number of four and five star reviews has just blown us away."

Almost 600 of Blacks' clients went out of their way to leave a review. The award is based on reviews left by owners over the course of a year.

Customers are asked to review the practice based on five areas of care – respect for my animal, professionalism, friendliness, cleanliness and value for money.

Heirloom is talk topic

THE 250-year journey of a family heirloom will be the subject of a local history talk in Dudley tonight (Thursday). Mary Bodfish, chairman of Smethwick Local History Society, will present 'The Baby in the Locket' at Dudley's Archives and Local History Centre in Tipton Road from 7.30pm.

Plea for helpers at beer festival

ORGANISERS of the 19th Stourbridge Beer Festival are looking for volunteers. The Stourbridge and Halesowen branch of the Campaign for Real Ale is holding the event in Stourbridge Town Hall from April 20 to 23.

Camra members can sign up to help out at any of the sessions at www.stourbridgebeerfest.org.uk

There will be more than 80 casks of real ale this year. Among the local breweries involved are Kinver Brewery, Halesowen breweries Fixed Wheel and Angel Ales; Pig Iron, Brierley Hill and Black Country Ales, Upper Gornal. The Mercian Alliance of Brewers is supplying a collaborative beer called Cnebba.

Get slice of the bake-off action

BAKERS are being invited to dust off their aprons take part in the first Great Dudley Bake-off this weekend.

The event on Saturday (April 9) is part of the Free Radio DY Eye event.

Brierley Hill Inner Wheel members have been asked to help run the event. There will be four categories; fruit cake, sponge cake, cupcake/muffin and biscuit/cookie. Entries can be dropped at Church of St Edmund, Castle Street, Dudley, between 9am and 10.15am on the day.

Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Steve Waltho will judge the entries with the winner being named at approximately 12.30pm.

Embroidery group has exhibition all sewn up

STUNNING fabric work is the order of the day at a show in an iconic Black Country venue.

The Wolverhampton Embroiderers Guild's exhibition is being held at the Red House Glass Cone in Wordsley until May 1.

Members of all abilities have taken the opportunity to create pieces in a theme of 'above and below'.

All sorts of different methods have been used to create the works, as long as they loosely fit into the theme.

Some members printed fabrics then hand-stitched them, while others stitched onto felt, or printed photos onto fabric then stitched on top.

Chairman Ruth Tykiff said: "People are given a free rein as long as they stay within the guidelines of 'above and below'.

Experience

"There were all sorts of textile production," she added.

"Some of the people are beginners and this is the first time they've put anything out on show.

"Anybody who comes forward can put something in and we put it up, so there's a real range of experience. We've had members of all ages, it's not just older people.

"Everybody has got their own skills, their own strengths and their own ideas and we allow them to do what they want to do."

For more information about the guild visit wolverhamptonembroiderers.blogspot.co.uk

Fossils by Trudy Osadnik is on show

Good Hare Day by Denise Foxall

Lillian Owen of Wall Heath with an embroidered fish bowl piece by Louise Henly

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Sun comes out for classic Annie

REVIEW

By Alison Norton

Annie,
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE sun certainly came out at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre earlier this week.

Nikolai Foster's superbly directed version of Annie the Musical opened to a packed audience, proving that we are still a sentimental bunch at heart.

The 1982 movie of the same name is a firm favourite, but can the stage adaptation possibly surpass the films? In my opinion, it certainly can and if anything, it is far more exciting and heart warming than either of the big screen attempts.

Having seen this production late last year starring Craig Revel Horwood as the wicked orphanage matron, Miss Hannigan, I simply could not wait to see one of our best-loved and funniest females, Lesley Joseph in the role and compare the two.

Lesley wins hands down, offering a superb comedy performance, perfect timing and who knew she could dance too?

Accent

With all the right moves she more than holds her own in what has to be a highlight of the show, the Easy Street number.

Granted Miss Joseph's accent is a little more Chigwell than New York, but let's forgive and forget.

However, while the adults deliver polished performances, the real stars are the uber-talented tribe of, as the song does, 'Little Girls' who completely steal the show right from under their nose.

Eleven-year-old Elise Blake as Annie carries the whole show on very young shoulders, absolutely bringing the house down with a voice to die for and exceptional acting talent. There are unbelievable strong performances from all of the orphans, but especially from Andie Jordan who at just seven is a shining star already.

Miss Hannigan and orphan Annie come face-to-face

Meanwhile, understudy Callum McArdle grabbed the chance to play Danny Warbucks with both hands and is every inch the billionaire destined to adopt the little red head, with smooth moves and a fine voice, while Holly Dale Spencer as Grace offers a beautifully refined performance and her outstanding soprano skills raise the rafters.

Nick Winston's choreography perfectly captures the feel of 1930s Broadway. The score features the likes of It's a Hard Knock Life, I Think I'm Gonna Like It Here and You're Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile, guaranteed to have you dancing in the street.

Finally, there's Annie's unforgettable solo Tomorrow, which never fails to melt even the hardest heart. Add to that a super cute dog called Amber in the role of Sandy.

They say never work with children and animals but in this case, they go towards creating the perfect musical.

Pure entertainment!

It runs until Saturday. Call 01902 429212 or visit www.grandtheatre.co.uk for tickets.

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VAT FREE IN QUALIFYING CASES

Stourbridge Chronicle Thursday, April 7, 2016

Real toy story in the antiques saleroom

ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES

By John Ridgway of Perry & Phillips

VINTAGE toys are always much sought after at auction so I thought this week we'd take a look at what is selling particularly well.

Before we do, however, it's fairly crucial to remember that with these vintage items in particular not only age but condition is all-important.

Toys, of course, are bought for children to be played with and often over the years they will have possibly sustained a fair amount of damage.

Having said that, some vintage toys will sell even with obvious signs of wear and tear, a vintage doll's clothes can be professionally cleaned by an expert, an old teddy bear similarly brushed up to look almost as good as new.

Some items – and those that will sell very well at auction – have been preserved in immaculate condition, even though they were played with in years gone by.

A Hornby and Bing train set came into the auction house a while ago dating from 1935 but it was all pristine because its twin brother owners had kept it incredibly carefully, although they had played with the set as young children.

The key factor was that they had looked after the set and put all pieces back in their original boxes – and these boxes do add to value if the items are subsequently sold at auction.

Some items, like model cars for instance, have clearly never been played with at all, sadly, and kept safely in their original packaging

So what will sell in the saleroom?

Well, let's begin with teddy bears and of course the Steiff bears are the ones to look out for.

Steiff was founded in Germany in 1880 by Margarete Steiff, who started by making pin-cushions in the shape of elephants for her friends.

These proved massively popular and so Margarete went on to make stuffed animal toys, including pigs and cats, and in 1902 her nephew Richard Steiff designed the very first 'teddy bear' named after US president Theodore Roosevelt.

The rest is history. The Steiff bears sold in huge quantities throughout the world and are today very much sought after by collectors.

They are easy to identify by the famous button in their ears – and in the case of very old Stieff bears the mark where a button was originally attached is enough to verify authenticity.

Antique dolls sell well at auction and can be made from a variety of materials, including bisque, celluloid, china, porcelain, cloth and papier mache.

Many of these antique dolls were manufactured in France and Germany, and there are certain names to look out for – Armand Marseille or Simon and Halbig, for example

Toy cars are also very collectable, age and condition being of great importance, plus original packaging is a definite bonus.

We sold a collection of Corgi and Dinky toy cars dating from the 1950s and 1960s for several hundred pounds but most of them were still pristine in their boxes.

And it's not just the 'classic' vintage toys dating back many years that catch the collector's eye . . . check your attic for old Barbie dolls, Action Man, Tamagochi, furbies and even trolls!

Perry and Phillips hold valuation days, for sale items only, every Wednesday from 10am until 4pm at their Mill Street saleroom in Low Town and auctions are held on the first Tuesday of each month.

You can't beat an egg for all-round goodness

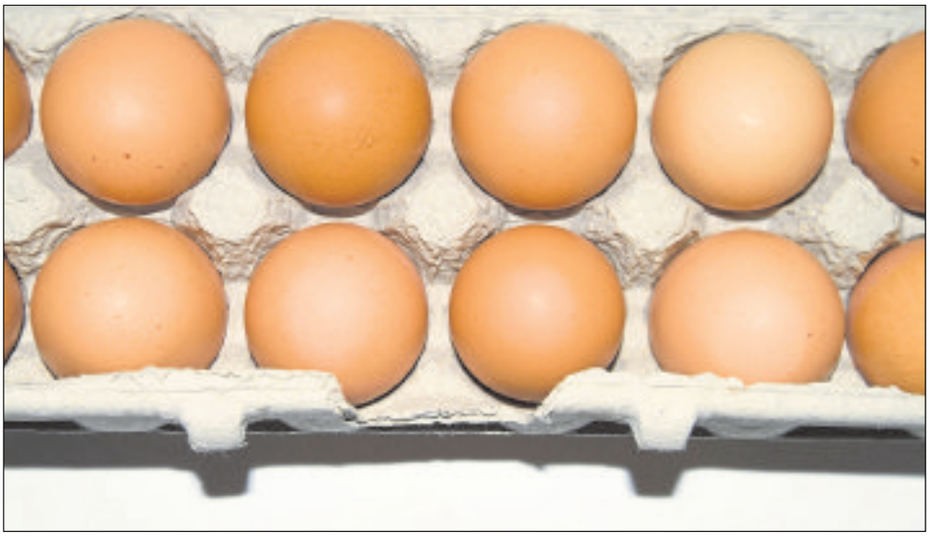
By Abi Jackson

PLANNING to indulge in a few foil-wrapped goodies over Easter?

Enjoy – life is too short to deny yourself those indulgent little pleasures – but while we're on the topic, let's take a moment to appreciate the cracking nutritional credentials of real eggs too.

When it comes to all-round healthiness, you really can't beat an egg (sorry!). Cheap, quick and easy, they go with everything, and are remarkably good for you too!

Here are five reasons to dip into more eggs...



Cheap, quick and easy, eggs go with everything, and are remarkably good for you too

EGG-STRA NUTRITIONAL

The term 'superfood' might seem like a modern marketing ploy, but it's a label that the humble egg is arguably quite deserving of.

"Eggs are a really nutritious food, providing an excellent range of micronutrients. As well as being rich in vitamin D, essential for normal bones and teeth and for both muscle and immune system function, they are also a good source of DHA – one of the omega 3 fatty acids – that contributes to normal brain and eye function," says Dr Juliet Gray, registered nutritionist and advisor to the British Egg Information Service (**www.egginfo.co.uk**).

"Eggs are also rich in selenium, important for hair and nails, the immune system, and thyroid function. On top of this, they contain more than 100 per cent of the RI [reference intake, formerly RDA] for vitamin B12, which we need for red blood cell function, and also vitamin A, vitamin B2, folate, biotin, pantothenic acid, iodine and phosphorus. All those nutrients in just one single food!"

PACKED FULL OF PROTEIN

There's been growing emphasis on packing plenty of protein into our diets recently. As well as being useful for weight management, protein's role in muscle growth and repair has helped up its popularity, as more and more of us get serious about our fitness regimes. Eggs contain all the essential amino acids which your body needs when refuelling after a workout and their high protein content helps to keep you satiated all morning.

BRILLIANT BREAKFASTS

Research has shown that people who eat eggs at breakfast eat less across the rest of the day compared to those who opt for grain-based cereals, as eggs help keep you feeling fuller for longer. They also pair extremely well with other health-boosters, to supercharge your breakfast even more, such as oily fish. Adding smoked salmon will boost those heart health omega 3 levels, and your intake of vitamin D. Serve on a bed of spinach or slice of granary toast for extra vitamins and fibre.

An egg for breakfast will set you up for the day ahead

Eggs contain many of the essential nutrients we need

SUPER SNACKS

One medium-sized egg contains around 65 calories, which makes them a fantastic choice as a healthy low-calorie snack. Not only will an egg leave you feeling far more satisfied – therefore keeping hunger pangs at bay – than say a packet of crisps (usually 100kcals upwards, depending on the brand) or single digestive biscuit (around 71kcals), they'll also really count in those healthy-eating efforts, thanks to their super-charged nutritional content.

WORK WONDERS FOR SKIN

We're often told that the quality of our diets is displayed in our complexions, and eggs rack up cracking scores in the skin-enhancing stakes.

"Eggs contain vitamin A, which helps the process of cell development – especially the development of new skin cells. This is why vitamin A is often included in beauty products," explains Shona Wilkinson, head nutritionist at natural health retailer NutriCentre (**www.nutricentre.com**).

"They also contain the antioxidants selenium, which helps prevent free radical damage, which is part of the aging process, and lutein and zeaxanthin, which help protect the skin against UV damage."

Celebrating one of our wardrobe necessities

The Levi Strauss brand was born in 1873

STYLE FOCUS

With Janet Timmis

DO you own a pair of jeans? The word 'jeans' comes from Genoa, Italy, where the sailors wore clothes made from a strong cotton fabric. It is thought the word 'denim' came from serge de Nimes. Serge is a cotton material produced in Nimes, France.

The story starts in the 18th Century when denim was used for workwear because it was so strong and lasted a long time.

In 1872 a manufacturer made his trouser pockets stronger by using rivets in the corners but could not afford to patent his idea so he asked one of his suppliers, Levi Strauss, to help finance the patent, he agreed and the first real pair of jeans, or waist overalls as they were known then, were produced in 1873, and the Levi Strauss brand was born. In 1886 they introduced the leather label and later the iconic red 'Levi' tab. The orange contrast thread used on Levi jeans, which is coloured to match the metal rivets, is trademarked!! The world's oldest surviving pair is 137 years old.

The size and range of model numbers in the Levi range defines the leg shape, cut, style and rise and continues to grow. The original 501's have a straight leg and buttoned fly, the choice seems endless.

Jeans became incredibly popular around the world when they were worn by American servicemen on their days off and the celebrity icons of the time were photographed in them, for instance, James Dean. It is said that on average every American owns at least seven pairs of jeans, it must be similar in the UK, there are very few people I know who do not own a pair.

Other well-known brands were created following the Levi Strauss success. Lee Cooper in 1908, Wrangler in 1947 and Pepe in 1973.

Today the biggest selling UK jeans brand is Diesel but most designer and high street brands carry jeans in their ranges. We see changing trends every year, this season it is time to ditch the skinny, ditch the stretch and the jeggins, it is time to return to original cotton denim anti-fit. Women will be wearing straight leg, boyfriend jeans and jumpsuits, less ripped than last year, more of a subtle distressed look. Men will find fuller leg styles and a relaxed fit. There will be embellishments and patchwork and popular colours will be white, indigo, stonewashed and some tie dye. Turned or roll hems and looking their best with a T-shirt, bomber jacket and classic white trainers or pumps.

Over the years, certain genres have worn jeans and created a 'damning' image such as rockabillies, skinheads, punks, certain places banning the wearing of them, but still adding to their credibility and never spoiling their appeal. They assign personality to the wearer and become a wardrobe necessity.

On May 20 it is their 143rd birthday – something to celebrate.

Visit www.jflexclusive.com, www.jflgarmentsolutions.co.uk, follow jflifeandloves on tumblr

Luxury home could be yours for around £2m

FIVE bedrooms, a luxurious lounge, spacious kitchen and beautiful garden offering splendid views of the countryside. It could all be yours – for close to £2 million.

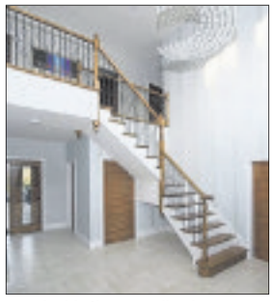
This marvellous mansion could soon have new occupants after being put on the market.

Located in the idyllic Hagley countryside near Stourbridge, the property was so stunning it has attracted the television cameras, having previously featured on the Channel 4 show Multi-Million Pound Properties.

It was built from scratch by its current owners and looks fit for a millionaire high-flier.

On its website, The Lee, Shaw Partnership, which is advertising the £1.85 million property for sale, describes it as having the perfect mix of classical elegance and contemporary style.

The house is guarded by a high brick wall and a grand gated entrance and it is not hard to envisage an Aston Martin or Lamborghini – or more likely both – pulling out to tour the surrounding countryside roads.



Inside the sprawling home

The views from the £1.85m property

The five-bedroom home in the idyllic Hagley countryside

Walkway

Four of the five bedrooms are en suite, while in the garden there is a patio with room for plenty of outside seating, not to mention a Jacuzzi, and a lit walkway which offers a view of hills and fields for as far as the eye can see.

The minimalist kitchen makes it appear huge, with an oven and microwave built into the walls, small unit space and all white walls and floors. Large doors and a window above also provide stunning views into the garden.

There is also a games room, with a cinema screen and pool table, which like the lounge, is set out over wooden panel flooring.

While much of the home caters for a life of luxury, there is also space for hard work with a study included. Agents Lee, Shaw say: "This particularly special, award-winning and impressive house effortlessly mixes classical elegance with contemporary style and bespoke specification, extending to in excess of 5,000 sq ft of accommodation."

The selling agents add: "There is nothing like this property currently on the market. Built and just completed by the present owners, the construction, design and specification has been beautifully executed to an outstanding standard."

The property, in Middlefield Lane, is close to Hagley railway station and a short drive from the village centre.

Advice on protecting property

Kingswinford TG

THE March 15 meeting, the 54th AGM, was begun by speaker Sarah Nixon.

Sarah is the home security and safety officer with the West Midlands crime and vulnerability office. She told ladies of ways to protect themselves and their property efficiently. Some of the actions were quite simple.

Most were common sense, such as making sure the front of the house is properly locked before going down the garden. There was lively discussion by members as they shared their own experiences. Sarah was thanked on behalf of the group by Sheila Watts.

Once the Annual General Meeting began, it was interesting to be reminded of what the guild had been up to during the previous year.

The present committee was re-elected en-bloc, but chairman Enid Fennell did point out that new members would be needed next year

Four members will not be able continue as regular members as health and other responsibilities make attendance almost impossible. Nevertheless, the guild is thriving. Doreen Conley said she was honoured to accept the role of president.

Joyce Robins was thanked for brightening the room with flowers, which she donated as an extra raffle prize. Prizes were won by Brenda Adkin and Barbara White.

The next meeting will be in Kingswinford Community Centre on April 11, at 7.30pm when Terry Church will give a talk entitled 'You Couldn't Make It Up'.

Crafty way to create floral arrangement

Some members stand by the floral arrangements, while others admire the cakes

Sedgley Evening Guild

THE guild's Arts and Craft Group left their knitting and sewing at home and enjoyed an afternoon of flower arranging.

A very pretty arrangement was made in a cup and saucer as shown in the picture.

You will also notice some of the ladies were even more interested in the lovely cakes supplied by the demonstrators.

The guild meets on the third Monday each month at Sedgley Community Centre at 7.15pm and the Arts and Craft Group each Wednesday afternoon.

New members and visitors will always be made welcome.

Presentation set in 24th century

Amblecote History Society

THE next indoor meeting of the Amblecote History Society takes place next Wednesday, April 13, at 7.30pm in The Lehr Theatre at the Ruskin Centre.

The ever-popular Andrew Lound will talk about 21st century history studies, contemplating how future historians might view and report this current day and age.

This unique and rarely presented talk sets the scene in which the audience forms the student assembly in a 24th century classroom. Andrew will give the 'accepted' interpretation of life in the 21st century.

There are many humorous jibes at the way in which artefacts are interpreted as well as a possible history of events from 2000 and upwards.

It is a great piece of satire that will leave you wondering about life today and how it will be viewed in the future.

The evening promises to be most entertaining and thought provoking.

Non-members are most welcome to join in. The admission charge is £2 on the door.

For more information about the 2016 meeting programme, visit www.amblecotehistorysociety.org.uk

Stourbridge Chronicle Thursday, April 7, 2016

Choose the mower that is right for your garden

There are so many lawnmowers on the market these days – rotary and cylinder, corded electric, cordless petrol, battery-powered and state-of-the-art robotic types. But which one is right for your budget, and right for your lawn?

Lawnmower prices range from under £100 to thousands for elaborate sit-on types, but expect to pay at least a few hundred if you have a fair-sized lawn and want something that will last.

Petrol, corded electric or battery are the main options and each has its own pros and cons.

In our environmentally-conscious world, battery-powered options – once dismissed by lawn lovers because of the batteries' dubious staying power and need to replace them after a winter in storage – have become more sophisticated as lithium-ion batteries don't lose power like the old ones.

Bosch stopped manufacturing petrol mowers in 2010 to go eco-friendly and has long been extolling the virtues of lithium-ion batteries which, it claims, perform as petrol equivalents but with low noise, low vibrations and savings on running costs. Battery-operated mowers are generally lighter machines, don't pump out carbon monoxide and are much quieter than their petrol counterparts.

Other than following battery care instructions and annually sharpening the blades, cordless mowers need no other kind of maintenance.

BATTERY POWER

The downsides of battery mowers are that you have to remember to recharge the batteries and they won't stripe your lawn as effectively as a heavier machine.

The Bosch Rotak 43 LI Ergoflex cordless lawnmower (£469.99, **shop.bosch-do-it.com**) can give an excellent cut for 40 minutes on one charge. It has a charge time of 140 minutes.

The new EGO Power+ lawnmower (£499, **www.egopowerplus.co.uk**) whispers in at 83 decibels, quieter than a food blender. On an average lawn on flat ground, the battery would last around 45 minutes and can recharge in 30.

PETROL POWER

Petrol-driven motors may be better for bigger lawns and where you need plenty of power on slopes or uneven surfaces. Users also won't encounter the cumbersome cables of electric models. There are push and self-propelled varieties with having throttle control.

Petrol mowers give a good striped effect as they are heavier and, although they need servicing, it could be argued that a well-maintained, good quality petrol mower will outlast most electric ones. The Mountfield SP454 self-propelled petrol lawnmower (£304, B&Q, **www.diy.com**) is a great option for lawns up to 1500m squared.

ELECTRIC POWER

A corded electric mower is fine for a smaller suburban garden, if you're not bothered about keeping the cable out of the way of the blades.

Electric 'hover' mowers are the cheapest, but can produce a disappointing finish, often require a spanner to adjust the mowing height and don't always collect grass efficiently.

Ultimately, your choice should depend on your lawn type and size. If you have a small or medium-sized lawn, a battery-operated mower or light electric type should be fine. The Bosch 32R Corded Lawnmower (£78.92, Homebase, **www.homebase.co.uk**) is lightweight and perfect for smaller lawns.

CYLINDER OR ROTARY?

Cylinder mowers are for the lawn perfectionist who wants a finer cut and bowling green finish. They are ideal for flat lawns and short grass, but struggle with long or wet grass. If you want the exercise, opt for a push variety. If you don't, self-propelled is the way to go.

Rotary mowers are better all-rounders, cut better in wet or long grass and cope well with uneven surfaces. Their blades can be easily changed. Try the Mac Allister 1300W Rotary Lawnmower (£84, B&Q, **www.diy.com**) – a great all-rounder for gardens of a good size.

NEW ALTERNATIVES

Some gardeners might prefer to sink a gin and tonic on the patio while watching the lawn being mown by a robotic device such as Robomow, which starts at an eye-popping £1,199 for the RC304, increasing to £2,799 for the upgraded RS635 model, available from selected dealers nationwide (**robomow.com**).

Potted chillies can make an attractive addition to a patio

It's time to begin sowing your peppers and tomatoes

GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT – Growing Chillies

You might be surprised to know that chillies can be trained easily into neat bushy plants which will give you enough fruits to keep you going for some time and deserve a place on the patio.

Start them off indoors by sowing two seeds into a 9cm pot and placing it on a heated propagator or warm windowsill, where you can maintain a constant temperature of 20C.

If both seeds germinate, remove the weaker one and gradually reduce the temperature to a minimum of 14C at night.

When the plant fills its space, pot it on into a two-litre pot of multipurpose compost and in June, place it in its final resting place in a five-litre pot in a sheltered spot on the patio.

When the plant is 20cm high, pinch out the growing tip to encourage bushiness. Water frequently on hot days during the summer and feed with a tomato fertiliser when the fruits start to form.

They're ready for picking when they are ripe but the skin is still smooth. Chillies will store well for a couple of weeks in the fridge or longer in the freezer.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

1. Plant container-grown outdoor grape vines
2. Divide hostas before they come into leaf
3. When space becomes available in the greenhouse, pot up cuttings of tender perennials taken last summer and at the beginning of this year
4. Plant roses in heavy soils or in cold areas
5. Protect new growth on lilies, delphiniums and any other plants affected by slugs and snails
6. Remove dead leaves from around the basal rosettes of alpine plants to prevent rotting
7. Plant herbaceous perennials, including geranium, astrantia and Oriental poppies
8. Sow sweet peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, aubergines, celery, salads and globe artichokes in a frost-free greenhouse
9. Remove reverted green shoots on hardy variegated evergreens to prevent reversion10. Cut out the top rosette of leaves from leggy stems of Mahonia x media cultivars to encourage branching

Spare a thought and give support for garden hosts

ROSS UNDERWOOD

Head Gardener at Hodnet Hall

SPARE a thought for those harried and wild eyed folks you might see dashing around the garden centre at this time who have bravely undertaken to open their gardens to the public.

Easter or the start of April is the traditional start of the garden open season.

Opening a garden has become an increasingly popular means of raising money for charity or simply for the upkeep of the garden.

No longer is it the preserve of those with rolling acres to display but more and more people with average sized gardens are putting out the signs and firing up the tea urn.

Whether you have done it a hundred times or for the first time, well done!

For the garden visitor it is great opportunity to peek behind the hedges and fences of normally private preserves and see plants, some rare, many familiar and more importantly to see how they have been used.

For the person opening the garden it can be a stressful experience.

Naturally opening a garden means opening it to the judgement of others.

You naturally want it to be right but are not sure just what 'right' constitutes.

This is often some hazily defined feeling that the weather and the plants have all come together to harmonise.

In the lead up to the big day theatre can be a lot of glances cast at the skies to see if rain will stop the lens being mowed or if there will be enough sun to bring out the colours of the flowers or woe of woes if the prised patch of snowdrops or crocus will have been devoured by the birds.

There will often be hurried trips to the garden centre to snaffle up anything that might be in flower.

Spare a thought for these brave people who are offering up something with which they are emotionally engaged for you to engage with.

Even better spare your time and the modest entrance fee they might be asking for.

It is not only gardeners who are keeping an eye on the weather, plants are, metaphorically, doing the same.

Many plants are beginning their reproductive lives right now whilst there very few pollinators around.

The secret to this ambitious act of procreation lies in the warm and windy days which we often experience at this time of year. With each gust clouds of microscopic pollen rise up and take to the air.

This wind pollination or Anemophily is a strategy used by many woody plants from temperate climates where insect activity, especially during the colder months is limited.

These pollen grains are tiny, about half the diameter of a human hair.

It is not only gardeners who are keeping an eye on the weather. Plants are, metaphorically, doing the same as pollination begins.

It takes a lot of effort, from gardeners and plants, to get best results

Now is the perfect time to pay a visit to the gardens

Much of this reproduction remains unnoticed because without the need to flaunt themselves the plants that rely on wind pollination eschew the superfluous production of nectar and flowers.

In fact what flowers they do produce are tiny and held in catkins or pedicels.

Nearly all conifers employ this method of reproduction.

If you are lucky enough to have a majestic yew or a yew hedge in the garden or around you can often see clouds of pollen being dispersed.

On trees such as oaks, ashes and Cercidiphyllum the pollen dispersal is accomplished before the leaves emerge which saves energy and let's the wind get to the all important pollen baring structures without being deflected.

This is a risky strategy, trusting the survival of your genetic material to the capricious spring weather especially as pollen from wind pollinated plants is often less viable over longer distances.

These plants often compensate for this by producing huge quantities of pollen, billions of grains.

So when you go out and visit a garden and as you drop your money in the entrance box remember that both the owners and the plants are risking something!

The gardens at Hodnet Hall are open to visitors from midday through to 5pm on Sundays and bank holiday Mondays until September 27. Admission costs £6.50 adults and children £1. Dogs are welcome on leads.

A plant fair will be held on June 4 and 5. The garden is open for the National Garden Scheme on June 12.

The Garden Restaurant serves light refreshments. For group visits contact the secretary on 01630 685786.

fast theticket

Opening Night

Twelfth Night preview
See Page 23

Miracle man

Derren Brown, Page 23

NATIVE MONSTER
Entertainment Unleashed

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Stourbridge Chronicle Thursday, April 7, 2016

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Beth Sherburn

Sunday, 6.30pm
Hare & Hounds, B'ham
Dudley pop singer Beth Sherburn, who was 'discovered' singing as she worked at a Merry Hill store, has a showcase gig at the Kings Heath pub venue, minimum age 14.
Visit **hareandhoundskingsheath**

Paul Zerdin

Tuesday, 8pm
Town Hall, B'ham
Last time he was in Brum ventriloquist Zerdin was part of the Hippodrome panto cast, now he's a Las Vegas star after winning America's Got Talent, minimum age 14.
Visit **www.thsh.co.uk**

The All-Star Stand-Up Tour

Wednesday, 8pm
Town Hall, B'ham
There will be mirth and magic as comedy trickster Pete Firman (pictured) joins a line-up of comics Sean Hughes, Mock The Week's Gary Delaney and compere Jarred Christmas.
Visit **www.thsh.co.uk**

T.Rextasy

Saturday, 8pm
Robin 2, Bilston
Get It On with Danielz, who has been the leading tribute to Marc Bolan and T.Rex for more than 20 years, celebrating the glam rock star who was Born To Boogie.
Visit **www.therobin.co.uk**

POP & ROCK

T-Rextasy: T-Rex Tribute
Sat at 7.30pm, £18
The Robin 2, Bilston,
WV14 7LJ.
Call 01902 401211

The Undercover Hippy
Wed at 7.30pm - 10.30pm,
£7
Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath,
Birmingham, B14 7JZ.
Call 0844 870 0000

Viva Neil Diamond
Fri at 7.30pm,
Newhampton Arts Centre,
Wolverhampton, WV1 4AN.
Call 01902 572090

Alxndr
Thu at 7pm,
O2 Academy Birmingham,
B1 1DB.
Call 0121 622 8250

Mercury: The Ultimate Queen Tribute
Thu at 7.30pm,
New Alexandra Theatre,
Birmingham,
B5 4DS. Call 0844 871 3011

Night
Thu at 8pm,
mac, Cannon Hill Road,
Birmingham, B12 9QH.
Call 0121 446 3232

Bry
Tue at 7pm,
The Institute,
Digbeth, Birmingham,
B5 6DY. Call 0121 643 0428

Michael Bolton
Fri at 7pm,
Symphony Hall,
Birmingham, B1 2EA.
Call 0121 780 3333

The Superskas
Sat at 7pm,
O2 Academy Birmingham,
B1 1DB.
Call 0121 622 8250

Hans Zimmer
Tue at 8pm,
Barclaycard Arena,
B1 2AA.
Call 0121 780 4141

Eliza And The Bear
Wed at 7pm, £10
The Institute,
Digbeth, Birmingham,
B5 6DY.
Call 0121 643 0428

Jack Garratt
Fri at 6pm - 10pm, £10
The Institute, Digbeth,
Birmingham, B5 6DY.
Call 0121 643 0428

Pvris
Sat at 6pm - 10pm,
The Institute, Digbeth,
Birmingham, B5 6DY.
Call 0121 643 0428

Harvey Sutherland
Fri - Sat at 9pm - 3am,
Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath,
Birmingham, B14 7JZ.
Call 0844 870 0000

The Bellrays
Tue at 7.30pm - 11pm,
Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath,
Birmingham, B14 7JZ.
Call 0844 870 0000

5 Seconds Of Summer
Thu at 6pm,
Genting Arena,
Birmingham, B40 1NT.
Call 0121 780 4141

The View
Tue at 7pm,
O2 Academy Birmingham,
B1 1DB.
Call 0121 622 8250

Funeral For A Friend
Wed at 7pm, Thu at 7pm,
£25
The Institute, Digbeth,
Birmingham, B5 6DY.
Call 0121 643 0428

Teleman
Fri at 7pm,
The Rainbow, 160 Digbeth,
Birmingham, B12 0LD.
Call 0121 753 1818

BLUES, JAZZ & SOUL

Betty Wright
Sat at 8pm,
The Drum,
Aston on Carrant, Birmingham,
B6 4UU.
Call 0121 333 2400

The Chicago Blues Brothers: Jailbreak Tour
Wed at 7.30pm,
New Alexandra Theatre,
Birmingham,
B5 4DS.
Call 0844 871 3011

Hot Club of Cowtown
Sat at 7pm - 11pm,
The Glee Club,
Birmingham, B5 4TD.
Call 0871 472 0400

Natasha Watts
Sun at 7pm - 11pm, £10
Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath,
Birmingham, B14 7JZ.
Call 0844 870 0000

Dollar Brand Party
Wed at 9.30pm - 10.30pm,
Birmingham Conservatoire,
Birmingham City University,
B3 3HG.
Call 0121 331 5901

FOLK & ACOUSTIC

Country Music Night
Sun at 8.15pm, £2
The Swan with 2 necks
Longdon, nr Lichfield
WS15 4PN

Amy Lavere
Fri, 7.30pm
St George's Hall,
Bewdley. Call 01299 400110

CLASSICAL & OTHER MUSIC

Dallas Symphony Orchestra
Tue at 7.30pm - 10pm,
£9.50 - £50
Symphony Hall,
Birmingham, B1 2EA.
Call 0121 780 3333

Creative Ensemble And Via Nova
Wed at 8.30pm - 9.30pm,
Birmingham Conservatoire,
Birmingham City University,
B3 3HG. Call 0121 331 5901

Monday Showcase: Schubert, Tchaikovsky And Rachmaninov
Mon at 1pm - 2pm,
Birmingham Conservatoire,
Birmingham City University,
B3 3HG.
Call 0121 331 5901

The Ambache Prize For The Performance Of Music By Women Composers
Wed at 7pm - 9pm,
Birmingham Conservatoire,
Birmingham City University,
B3 3HG.
Call 0121 331 5901

G4: Back For Good
Mon at 7.30pm,
Birmingham Town Hall,
B3 3DQ.
Call 0121 780 3333

Tamsin Waley-Cohen Plays Tchaikovsky
Wed at 2.30pm - 4.30pm,
Birmingham Town Hall,
B3 3DQ.
Call 0121 780 3333

CBSO 2015-16 - Bruckner's Ninth
Wed at 7.30pm, £12.50 - £45
Symphony Hall,
Birmingham, B1 2EA.
Call 0121 780 3333

THEATRE

Annie
Fri at 7.30pm, Sat at 2.30pm,
7.30pm,
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre,
WV1 1DE.
Call 01902 573320

Disney On Ice: Silver Anniversary Celebration
Fri at 7pm, Sat at 11am, 3pm,
7pm, Sun at 11am, 3pm, 7pm,
Genting Arena,
Birmingham, B40 1NT.
Call 0121 780 4141

Calling For Help!
Fri, Sat
mac, Cannon Hill Road,
Birmingham, B12 9QH.
Call 0121 446 3232

Rehearsal For Murder
Fri at 7.30pm, Sat at 2.30pm,
7.30pm,
New Alexandra Theatre,
Birmingham, B5 4DS.
Call 0844 871 3011

The Chairs
Tue at 8pm, Wed at 2pm,
mac, Cannon Hill Road,
Birmingham, B12 9QH.
Call 0121 446 3232

We'll Meet Again
Mon at 2.30pm,
Prince Of Wales Centre,
Cannock, WS11 1DE.
Call 01543 578762

Derren Brown: Miracle
Mon at 7.30pm, Tue at 7.30pm,
Wed at 7.30pm, Thu at
7.30pm,
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre,
WV1 1DE.
Call 01902 573320

Twelfth Night
Tue at 7pm, Wed at 7.30pm, Thu
at 2pm, 7.30pm,
Birmingham Repertory Theatre,
B1 2EP.
Call 0121 236 4455

The Rotters' Club
Fri at 7.30pm, Sat at 4pm,
8.30pm,
Birmingham Repertory Theatre,
B1 2EP.
Call 0121 236 4455

Folk
Thu at 7.45pm,
Birmingham Repertory Theatre,
B1 2EP.
Call 0121 236 4455

Mary Poppins
Fri at 7.30pm, Mon at 7.30pm,
Tue at 7.30pm, Wed at 2pm, 2pm,
7.30pm, 7.30pm, Thu at 2pm,
2pm, 7.30pm, 7.30pm, £25.55 -
£30.60
Birmingham Hippodrome,
B5 4TB.
Call 0844 338 5000

COMEDY

The All-Star Stand-Up Tour 2016
Wed at 8pm,
Birmingham Town Hall,
B3 3DQ.
Call 0121 780 3333

Shazia Mirza: The Kardashians Made Me Do It
Sat at 12am,
The Old Rep Theatre,
Birmingham, B5 4DY.
Call 0121 605 5116

ART GALLERIES

A Big Bang: The Origins Of The Pop Art Collection Part 2
Sat at 10am - 5pm,
Wolverhampton Art Gallery,
WV1 1DU.
Call 01902 552055

Into The Woods
Fri at 10am - 5pm, Sat at 11am -
5pm, Sun at 11am - 5pm, Mon at
10am - 5pm, Tue at 10am - 5pm,
Wed at 10am - 5pm, Thu at 10am
- 5pm,
Barber Institute of Fine Arts,
University of Birmingham,
B15 2TS.
Call 0121 414 7333

Prestige & Power: Projecting Identity In 17th-Century Portraiture
Fri at 10am - 5pm, Sat at 11am -
5pm, Sun at 11am - 5pm, Mon at
10am - 5pm, Tue at 10am - 5pm,
Wed at 10am - 5pm, Thu at 10am
- 5pm,
Barber Institute of Fine Arts,
University of Birmingham,
B15 2TS.
Call 0121 414 7333

Antiques For Everyone Spring Fair
Fri at 11am - 6pm, Sat at 11am -
6pm, Sun at 11am - 5pm,
The NEC Birmingham,
B40 1NT.
Call 0121 780 4141

Chance, Order, Change: Abstract Paintings 1939-1989
Fri at 10am - 5pm, Sat at 11am -
5pm, Sun at 11am - 5pm, Mon at
10am - 5pm, Tue at 10am - 5pm,
Wed at 10am - 5pm, Thu at 10am
- 5pm,
Barber Institute of Fine Arts,
University of Birmingham,
B15 2TS. Call 0121 414 7333

Big Ceramics: Discover Clay On A Monumental Scale
Fri at 10am - 5pm, 10am -
5pm,
Wolverhampton Art Gallery,
WV1 1DU. Call 01902 552055

Andrea Hannon: The House Is Still Named After Him
Fri at 10am - 5pm, Sat at 10am -
5pm, Mon at 10am - 5pm, Tue at
10am - 5pm, Wed at 10am - 5pm,
Thu at 10am - 5pm,
Wolverhampton Art Gallery,
WV1 1DU.
Call 01902 552055

New Art West Midlands 2016
Fri at 10am - 5pm, Sat at 10am -
5pm, Mon at 10am - 5pm, Tue at
10am - 5pm, Wed at 10am - 5pm,
Thu at 10am - 5pm, 10am - 5pm,
Wolverhampton Art Gallery,
WV1 1DU. Call 01902 552055

Laura Lancaster
Fri at 10am - 5pm, Sat at 10am -
5pm, Sun at 12pm - 4pm, Tue at
10am - 5pm, Wed at 10am - 5pm,
Thu at 10am - 5pm,
The New Art Gallery Walsall,
WS2 8LG. Call 01922 654400

Jan Vanriet The Music Boy
Fri at 10am - 5pm, Sat at 10am -
5pm, Sun at 12pm - 4pm, Tue at
10am - 5pm, Wed at 10am - 5pm,
Thu at 10am - 5pm,
The New Art Gallery Walsall,
WS2 8LG. Call 01922 654400

Check out full listings in **the ticket** in Friday's Express & Star

Shakespeare in a rock 'n' roll riot

Oliver Dimsdale (Toby Belch), Jonathan Broadbent (Orsino) and Syreeta Kumar (Olivia) in Filter's version of Twelfth Night

FOLLOWING a run in New York and an extensive tour of India, Filter Theatre mark 400 years since William Shakespeare's death by bringing their critically-acclaimed production of Twelfth Night to Birmingham Repertory Theatre from Tuesday to Saturday, April 16.

This story of romance, satire and mistaken identity is crafted into one of the more exciting and accessible Shakespeare productions of recent years. Olivia's puritanical household clashes head on with Sir Toby Belch's insatiable appetite for drunken debauchery as the deluded Malvolio has an extraordinary transformation in this new take on the classic play

Originally commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company's former artistic director Michael Boyd as part of their Complete Works Festival, Filter's characteristically radical and riotous interpretation reaffirms their reputation as one of the most inventive theatre companies.

They promise that no two shows will be the same with decisions taken on the hoof as the narrative unfolds each night. In this informal production the stage is covered in cables, technical equipment, amplifiers and musical instruments that enable Filter to create the play in what promises to be more akin to a rock concert than classic theatre.

You'll believe in a Miracle

MASTER of illusion Derren Brown is bringing his latest show, Miracle, to Wolverhampton Grand Theatre to amaze and baffle audiences.

Previous shows Svengali and Infamous have left packed venues stunned. This will be his seventh production since 2003 but the award-winning showman, who uses psychology to create the illusion of supernatural powers, is giving few clues on what to expect this time.

"As ever, I ask people to keep the contents of the show a secret," says the two-time Olivier Award winner.

"But I can certainly say that this show has a more philosophical flavour and looks at ways of thinking that may make us happier.

" In some ways it's the boldest, most contentious show yet. But audiences are responding well to it and I just love doing it — it's quite a rollercoaster."

Having performed to one and a half million people over 13 years, Croydon-born Brown says the magic genre can continue to break boundaries.

"Magic is a very childish thing at heart: the quickest, most fraudulent route to impressing people. It's based in dishonesty. So you have to work harder to make it have artistic merit or relevance.

"I am often dishonest in my techniques but I'm always honest about my dishonesty."

Miracle will be at the Grand from Monday to Saturday, April 16.

Top of the Pops with The Rezillos

A BAND that put a smile on the faces of New Wave fans back in the 70s are back, as Scottish outfit The Rezillos have a gig at Wolverhampton's Slade Rooms tomorrow night (Friday).

Still fronted by Fay Fife and Eugene Reynolds, the band lit up the punk era with their day-glo blend of 60s-inspired sci-fi rock 'n' roll with such songs as Top Of The Pops and Flying Saucer Attack, before mutating into The Revillos.

That's the same night that rising star Jack Garratt has sold-out the O2 Institute in Birmingham. The Digbeth venue will also have a full house for Pvris on Saturday and Funeral For A Friend on Wednesday.

Movie music night with Oscar winner

HOLLYWOOD'S most in-demand composer, Hans Zimmer, is coming to Birmingham's Barclaycard Arena on Tuesday for one of only two UK shows.

The German-born musician has composed the soundtracks to blockbusters such as Inception, Interstellar, The Dark Knight Trilogy, Gladiator, 12 Years a Slave, The Lion King, Pirates of the Caribbean and many more. Zimmer's studio band will be appearing with Lebo M, known for his vocals on Zimmer's Academy Award-winning score for Disney's The Lion King, as well as an orchestra and choir, with over 70 musicians on stage.

Zappa guitarist in special tribute gig

A PUNK diva plus tributes to a glam rock legend and two of rock's great mavericks will feature at Bilston's Robin 2 venue.

New Wave 80s star Hazel O'Connor, whose movie Breaking Glass provided hit singles Eighth Day and the poignant Will You, teams up with former Belle Stars saxophonist Claire Hirst at the Mount Pleasant venue tonight (Thursday).

T Rextasy take fans back to the 70s heyday of Marc Bolan on Saturday and on Sunday the Muffin Men pay tribute to Frank Zappa and Captain Beefheart's Magic Band with Zappa/Beefheart guitarist Denny Walley AKA Feelers Rebo.

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The ticket is for the Saturday evening.

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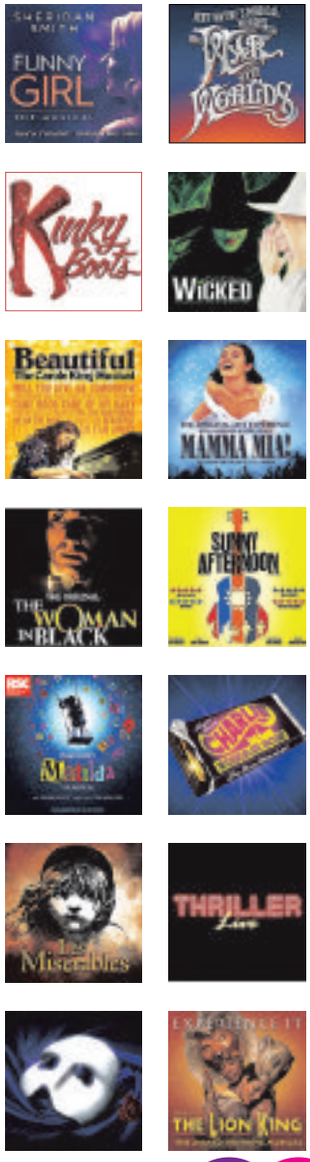

DAYS: 2 OR 3 DEPARTS: VARIOUS DATES

CHOICE

Ant & Dec

Britain's Got Talent (ITV, 7pm)
New series. Simon Cowell, Amanda Holden, Alesha Dixon and David Walliams take their seats on the judges' panel as the nationwide variety talent show returns for its tenth series, giving another crop of would-be comedians, contortionists, street-dance outfits and all-round entertainers a chance to wow the all-star panel - and the viewers at home – with their most prized skills. This year, the contest looks set to feature as wide a variety of acts as ever, including a one-man band on stilts, puppetry, archery and an orchestra with a twist, and Simon has promised that the winner will receive not only a £250,000 cash prize and a place in the Royal Variety Show, but also a 'special surprise' he has described as 'priceless'.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** MasterChef. (R) **12.00** BBC News; Weather. **12.10** Football Focus. **12.50** Saturday Sportsday. **1.00** Kelly Holmes: My Marathon Story. **1.30** Golf: The Masters Highlights. **2.30** Bargain Hunt. (R) **3.15** Escape to the Country. (R) **4.00** Final Score. **5.20** Now You See It. **5.50** BBC News.

6.00 Regional Programme.

6.10 Can't Touch This. A karate instructor, a would-be Red Coat, and a baker from Armagh with a terrible sense of direction are among the 16 contestants battling their way through a giant obstacle course filled with prizes that are just out of reach. If the competitors are able to lay hands on any of the goodies within, they can take them home, including a grand prize that requires a giant leap of faith to claim. Presented by Zoe Ball and Ashley Banjo, with narration by Sue Perkins.

7.00 The Voice UK. This year's contest draws to a close as the four most successful contestants take to the stage one last time in the grand final. Having progressed through seven weeks of blind auditions, two battle rounds, two knockout stages and two live shows, the would-be stars face the ultimate test of their vocal abilities, with the winner earning themselves a recording contract. Superstar coaches Will.i.am, Ricky Wilson, Paloma Faith and Boy George perform together one final time as fans at home cast their votes to determine which would-be pop icon will claim the title of The Voice UK 2016. Last in the series.

9.00 Casualty. Jacob enlists an unlikely ally to help him track down a dangerous drug dealer, and Big Mac becomes increasingly reliant on painkillers. Medical drama, starring Charles Venn.

9.50 The National Lottery Live.

10.00 BBC News; Weather.

10.20 Match of the Day. Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including West Ham United v Arsenal at Upton Park; National Lottery Update.

11.45 Film: Deja Vu. (2006) Sci-fi thriller, starring Denzel Washington and Paula Patton.

1.40 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.45** BBC News.

BBC2

6.25 Film: Sister Kenny. (1946) Fact-based drama, starring Rosalind Russell. **8.20 Film:** Goodbye, Mr Chips. (1939) Period drama, with Robert Donat. **10.10** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **11.10** Natural World. (R) **12.00** Rick Stein: From Venice to Istanbul. (R) **1.00 Film:** Henry V. (1989) The English king leads his armies into battle to reclaim control of France. Adaptation of Shakespeare's historical play, directed by and starring Kenneth Branagh. With Derek Jacobi. **3.15** Flog It! (R) **4.00** Bake Off: Creme de la Creme. (R) **5.00** World's Weirdest Events. (R)

6.00 Tribes, Predators & Me. Gordon Buchanan travels around the world, learning traditional hunting methods from members of tribal cultures and joining them in pursuing dangerous predators. (R)

7.00 Dad's Army. Corporal Jones misplaces £500 donated by local shopkeepers to provide a new canteen for servicemen, so the platoon tries to help him remember what he did with it. Comedy first broadcast in 1972, starring Clive Dunn, John Le Mesurier and Arthur Lowe. (R)

7.30 Golf: The Masters Live. Hazel Irvine introduces coverage of the third day from the Augusta National in Georgia, as the opening Major of the year continues. While conditions on this famous course are notoriously difficult, Jordan Speith made light of such matters last year on his way to winning his first Major, establishing a new Masters record for the lowest 54-hole score, and helping himself to a four-shot lead over Justin Rose in the process. While Speith hasn't been quite at his best in the early part of this year, the American is still among the favourites, with the European charge led by former world number one Rory McIlroy. With commentary by Peter Alliss, Ken Brown and Andrew Cotter. Subsequent programmes subject to change.

12.00 Film: The Mummy. (1959) An ancient Egyptian priest returns to life to kill those who have desecrated the 4,000-year-old sacred tomb of a princess. Hammer horror, starring Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee. **1.25 Film:** Stark Raving Mad. (2002) Crime comedy, starring Seann William Scott and Timm Sharp. **3.00** This Is BBC Two. Preview of upcoming programmes from BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 Scrambled!: Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.15** Scrambled!: Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.25** Scrambled!: Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.35** Scrambled!: Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.50** Scrambled!: Signed Stories. (R) **6.55** Scrambled!: Sooty. (R) **7.05** Scrambled!: Super 4. (R) **7.15** Scrambled!: Looped. (R) **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: Horrid Henry. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: Nerds & Monsters. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Thunderbirds Are Go. (R) **9.05** Scrambled!: The Tom & Jerry Show. (R) **9.25** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **10.15** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **11.15** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **12.15** ITV News; Weather.; **12.24** Regional Programme. **12.25** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **1.25** Judge Rinder. (R) **2.25** The Chase. (R) **3.25 Film:** Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang. (2010) **5.30** Regional Programme ; Weather.**5.45** ITV News; Weather.

6.00 You've Been Framed! XXL. Harry Hill presents an extra-large edition of the show, revisiting some of the best mishaps, hijinks and side-splitting disasters captured on video by intrepid viewers.

7.00 Britain's Got Talent. New series. Judges Simon Cowell, Amanda Holden, Alesha Dixon and David Walliams take up their places on the judges' panel as the nationwide talent show returns for its tenth series.

8.25 You're Back in the Room. Coronation Street stars Anthony Cotton and Jennie McAlpine join Phillip Schofield and Keith Barry as five more hypnotised strangers team up to win a potential £25,000. Last in the series.

9.25 Film: The Fast and the Furious. (2001) An undercover cop infiltrates the world of illegal street racing in search of a hijacking ring, but starts to question his loyalties. Thriller, starring Vin Diesel and Paul Walker.

10.25 ITV News; Weather.

10.40 Film: The Fast and the Furious. (2001) Concludes.

11.40 The Cube. Derry-Londonderry radiographer Lindsey is determined to stay calm under pressure, followed by Yorkshireman Keith – the oldest person to have appeared on the show. (R)

12.40 Jackpot247. **3.00** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.15 How I Met Your Mother. (R) **6.40** How I Met Your Mother. (R) **7.05** Freeride World Tour. **7.30** Tarawera Ultra Marathon. **7.55** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.25** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **9.00** The Grand National Morning Line. **11.00** Weekend Brunch – From the Grand National. **2.00** The Grand National Live from Aintree. Including the 5.15 Crabbie's Grand National Steeple Chase (4m 2 1/2f).

6.30 Speed with Guy Martin. The motorbike fan takes on the challenge of building the world's fastest soapbox racer in an attempt to set a new speed record using just the pull of gravity and a tarmac road. To get to grips with going blisteringly fast on a public road, Guy tries his hand at street luge with former global champion Helene Schmit, before joining his team of engineers to explore the science of rolling resistance and the importance of tyre pressure. Armed with what they believe to be the perfect formula, they produce a unique soapbox cart inspired by Mother Nature and, after training with the Team GB women's bobsled pair, confidence is high – but are disaster and mayhem just around the corner? Last in the series. (R)

7.30 Channel 4 News.

8.00 Film: Johnny English Reborn. (2011) A bumbling secret agent retires to a Tibetan monastery in disgrace after a mission goes wrong. He is lured out of seclusion by the chance to redeem himself when his former bosses seek his help in foiling an attempt to assassinate the premier of China. Spy comedy sequel, starring Rowan Atkinson, Gillian Anderson, Rosamund Pike and Dominic West.

10.00 Film: Die Hard. (1988) A New York cop battles armed men who have taken over a Los Angeles skyscraper where his wife is working on Christmas Eve. Action thriller, starring Bruce Willis and Alan Rickman.

12.35 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. (R) **1.30** Hollyoaks. Omnibus. Nancy accuses Darren of gambling again. (R) **3.35** Hugh's 3 Good Things: Best Bites. (R) **3.45** Location, Location, Location. (R) **4.40** Kirstie's Vintage Gems. (R) **4.55** Selling Houses with Amanda Lamb. **5.50** How I Met Your Mother. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **8.55** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. **9.30** The Saturday Show Live. **11.30** Police Interceptors: Under Attack. (R) **12.25** Police Interceptors: Dog Squad. (R) **1.20** Police Interceptors: Deadly Pursuits. (R) **2.20** GPs: Behind Closed Doors. (R) **3.20** GPs: Behind Closed Doors. (R) **4.15** GPs: Behind Closed Doors. (R) **5.10** GPs: Behind Closed Doors. (R)

6.05 NCIS: Los Angeles. Kensi goes undercover as a highly trained cat burglar to find out why a sophisticated thief is planning to steal antiquities from a naval base.

7.00 NCIS: New Orleans. Don Lambert, an accountant who offered to testify against weapons trafficker Hugo Garza, dies after slipping away from the Federal Marshals tasked with keeping him safe ahead of the trial. In an attempt to ensure justice is done, Pride offers to personally escort a replacement witness – Lambert's former business partner – to the trial in Texas. However, the killer is still out there, and it's not long before Pride, Sonja and their witness face an ambush. Naval crime drama, starring Scott Bakula.

8.00 NCIS. The team investigates the cause of a hit-and-run incident in which a Petty Officer has been killed. Meanwhile, Gibbs works to clear a Navy Hospital Corpsman.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 The Championship: Football League Tonight. Kelly Cates and George Riley present extended highlights of the weekend's matches from the Championship, including Burnley v Leeds United and Middlesbrough v Preston North End.

10.00 Goal Rush: Football League Tonight. A round-up of the latest matches in League One and League Two, including Scunthorpe United v Burton Albion, Wigan Athletic v Coventry City and Northampton Town v Bristol Rovers.

10.30 NCIS. A US Navy captain is held hostage in his own office while his wife and blind daughter are abducted, and the kidnappers try to extort a large sum of money from him for their release. (R)

11.25 NCIS. (R)

12.15 SuperCasino. **3.10** Law & Order: Special Victims Unit. (R) **4.40** Divine Designs. (R) **5.05** HouseBusters. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Treasures of the Indus **8.00** Human Planet **9.00** Follow the Money **11.00** The Joy of the Guitar Riff **12.00** The Kinks at the BBC **1.00** Top of the Pops: 1981 **1.35** Nile Rodgers: The Hitmaker **2.35** The Joy of the Guitar Riff **3.35** Close

ITV2
11.15 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway **12.45** The Almost Impossible Gameshow **1.40** Scorpion **2.40** Celebrity Catchphrase **3.40** Britain's Got More Talent: Top 10 Live Show Moment **4.45 Film:** King Kong (2005) **5.45** FYI Daily **5.50 Film:** King Kong (2005) **8.25** Britain's Got More Talent **9.25** Family Guy **10.20** Celebrity Juice **11.10** Family Guy **11.35** American Dad! **12.35** @elevenish **1.00** The Cleveland Show **1.55** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.20** Planet's Funniest Animals **2.45** The Hot Desk: Zara Larsson **2.55** Teleshopping **5.55** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3
2.15 Goodnight Mister Tom **4.25 Film:** Columbo: Fade in to Murder (1976) **6.00** Agatha Christie's Marple **8.00** Foyle's War **10.00** Lewis **12.00** Blue Murder **1.35** Doctor at Large **2.00** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping

ITV4
3.00 FYI Daily **3.05 Film:** Police Academy 3: Back in Training (1986) **3.45 Film:** From Russia with Love (1963) **4.45** FYI Daily **4.50 Film:** From Russia with Love (1963) **6.05** The Motorsport Mavericks **7.10** The Big Fish Off **8.15 Film:** Police Academy 7: Mission to Moscow (1994) **9.15** FYI Daily **9.20 Film:** Police Academy 7: Mission to Moscow (1994) **10.00 Film:** Passenger 57 (1992) **11.00** FYI Daily **11.05 Film:** Passenger 57 (1992) **11.45 Film:** A Dangerous Man (2010) **12.45** FYI Daily **12.50 Film:** A Dangerous Man (2010) **1.40** Minder **2.35** Movies Now **2.40** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping

E4
12.00 How I Met Your Mother **1.00** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **2.00 Film:** Hop (2011) **4.00** Ice Age: The Great Egg-Scapade **4.25** The Goldbergs **6.00** The Big Bang Theory **9.00 Film:** Easy A (2010) **10.50** Gogglebox **1.00** Rude Tube **2.00** The IT Crowd **3.00** How I Met Your Mother **3.45** New Girl **4.30** Revenge

Film4
11.00 Picture Perfect (1997) **1.00** Turner & Hooch (1989) **3.00** Dunston Checks In (1996) **4.40** Mirror Mirror (2012) **6.45** Starman (1984) **9.00** I, Robot (2004) **11.15** The Divide (2011) **1.30** Max Payne (2008) **3.35** Close

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CHOICE

Leanne Best

Undercover (BBC1, 9pm)
Maya's fight for justice becomes a serious threat to the establishment, setting out to bring shocking secrets to light. Nick is consumed with guilt as he recalls his time as an undercover police officer, and his infiltration of an anti-racist organisation led to his first meeting with his wife. When a violent incident erupted during a march and one of the leading activists was attacked, Nick was left struggling to reconcile his feelings for Maya and his loyalty to the police force he serves, but has begun to question. Sophie Okonedo, Adrian Lester, Tamara Lawrence, Daniel Ezra, Shannon Hayes, Vincent Regan, Alistair Petrie, Mark Bonnar, Derek Riddell, Clare Holman, Adrian Schiller and Leanne Best star.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.35** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **2.15** Secret Britain. (R) **3.15** Escape to the Country. (R) **4.00** Points of View. **4.15** Songs of Praise. **5.00** Life in the Air.

6.00 Paul O'Grady: The Sally Army and Me. Paul reads a Bible story to a room full of children, and gets a glimpse of the future when he tries on an age simulation suit to experience the physical demands of growing old.

6.30 BBC News.

6.50 Regional Programme.

7.00 Countryfile. John Craven follows LS Lowry's journeys around Northumberland, accompanied by the man who used to drive him on his trips, and meets the last of Berwick's traditional fishermen, a subject often painted by the artist. Ellie Harrison investigates how to conserve moorland and meets a heavy horse breeder, while Charlotte Smith reports on domestic violence in isolated rural areas. Plus, the second of this year's Farming Heroes nominees. Including Weather For The Week Ahead.

8.00 Antiques Roadshow. Fiona Bruce and the team visit Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, where they value an ugly family heirloom that turns out to have an important heritage – and a surprising value.

9.00 Undercover. Maya threatens to expose secrets in the establishment, while Nick is consumed with guilt as he recalls his time as an undercover police officer and his first meeting with his wife.

10.00 BBC News.

10.20 Regional Programme.

10.30 Match of the Day 2. Highlights of the latest Premier League matches, featuring Tottenham Hotspur v Manchester United and Sunderland v Leicester City.

11.40 Film: The Hot Chick. (2002) A petty crook and a snooty cheerleader swap bodies, leaving the thief free to indulge in a crime spree while posing as a go-go dancer. Comedy, with Rob Schneider and Rachel McAdams.

1.15 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.20** BBC News.

BBC2

6.15 Great British Garden Revival. (R) **7.15** This Farming Life. (R) **8.15** An Island Parish. (R) **8.45** The Beechgrove Garden. **9.15** Countryfile. (R) **10.15** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.45** The Best Dishes Ever. (R) **12.15** MOTD2 Extra. **1.00** Triathlon. **2.50** Live Gymnastics: British Championships. Coverage of the Artistic Gymnastics British Championships from Liverpool. **5.00** The Hairy Bikers' Northern Exposure. (R)

6.00 Great British Railway Journeys. Michael Portillo sets off from Newcastle on the final leg of his journey from Derby to Lindisfarne, finding out about the world's earliest swing bridge and its inventor William Armstrong. He also travels by boat from the port of Seahouses to examine the story of lighthouse keeper's daughter Grace Darling, who, along with her father, rescued nine people from tumultuous seas in 1838. On the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, Michael explores the lime kilns and finds out how Christianity spread from here across northern England in the 7th century. (R)

6.30 Golf: The Masters Live. Hazel Irvine introduces coverage of the fourth and final day from the Augusta National in Georgia, as the opening Major of the year reaches a conclusion. Jordan Speith started the final day four shots ahead of his nearest rival last year and showed no signs of any nerves affecting his game, eventually holding that advantage ahead of Phil Mickelson and Justin Rose, who were tied for second. Speith also equalled the lowest 72-hole total for the Masters and set the record for the most birdies for the week, confirming his rise to fame and clinching his first Major. Rose finished as the highest-placed European, with fellow Englishmen Ian Poulter and Paul Casey also in the top 10, along with Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy and Hideki Matsuyama of Japan. With commentary by Peter Alliss, Ken Brown and Andrew Cotter. Subsequent programmes subject to change.

12.00 The People v OJ Simpson: American Crime Story. (R) **12.40** Sign Zone: Countryfile. (R) **1.35** Holby City. Serena's personal involvement with a patient affects her professional judgement. (R) **2.35** This Is BBC Two. Preview of upcoming programmes.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Bottom Knocker Street. **6.15** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.25** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **6.50** Sooty. (R) **7.05** Super 4. (R) **7.15** Looped. (R) **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: Horrid Henry. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: Nerds & Monsters. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Teen Titans Go! (R) **9.05** Scrambled!: The Tom & Jerry Show. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **10.25** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **11.25** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **12.30** ITV News; Weather. **12.45** River Monsters. (R) **1.50** Big Star's Little Star. (R) **2.50** Britain's Got Talent. (R) **3.50 Film:** Licence to Kill. (1989) James Bond spy thriller.

6.30 Regional Programme; Weather.

6.45 ITV News; Weather.

7.00 The Chase Celebrity Special. Charlie Brooks, Richard Whitehead, Shappi Khorsandi and David Dickinson work as a team to take on a quiz genius and secure a cash prize for charity. Presented by Bradley Walsh.

8.00 The Durrells. Larry falls dangerously ill, and Theo and his neighbour put their rudimentary medical skills to the task of saving him. Spiros brings good news from a surprising source.

9.00 Home Fires. Laura is publicly disgraced when news of the Bowers' divorce hits the papers, with grave consequences for the surgery and her friendship with Tom. Pat is tempted by her feelings for Marek while Bob is in hospital. Steph is delighted when Stan returns home on leave, but the reunion is overshadowed by his fears of invasion. Frances discovers a secret at the reading of the will.

10.05 ITV News; Weather.

10.20 100 Year Old Drivers. On the road with some of Britain's oldest motorists, including a bomber command veteran who drives to the betting shop every day. (R)

11.20 Murder, She Wrote. Jessica visits a friend's Arizona ranch – but as soon as she arrives, the community is plunged into disarray by a local psychic's sinister predictions. (R)

12.15 Jackpot247. **3.00** ITV Nightscreen. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.15 How I Met Your Mother. (R) **6.40** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.05** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.55** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.25** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces. (R) **1.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **2.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **2.30 Film:** Bridge to Terabithia. (2007) Drama, starring Josh Hutcherson. **4.25 Film:** Rango. (2011) Premiere. Oscar-winning animated comedy, with the voice of Johnny Depp.

6.30 Channel 4 News.

7.00 The Secret Life of the Zoo. With numbers in the wild dwindling rapidly, Chester Zoo's black rhino breeding programme is a key part of preserving the species. In this episode, black rhino Kitani is introduced to new mate Magadi, but with injury a high risk during mating, keeper Babs is concerned that Kitani may struggle to defend herself, since she lost her horn after the death of her calf. Meanwhile, there's a surprise birth in the orangutan house, and older sibling Tuti has to fend for herself and set out on the road to independence. Last in the series. (R)

8.00 Hidden Britain by Drone. Tony Robinson presents the first of two programmes using drones to shoot aerial footage of areas of Britain that are off limits to the public. Among the locations featured is a village on Salisbury Plain that is not listed on any maps, and is used by the military for training. The drones record an exercise involving tanks storming the area. Other sites include the world's most advanced container port, a Second World War bunker, an abandoned airbase that once housed nuclear weapons, and an 18th-century mansion belonging to a Russian billionaire.

9.00 Indian Summers. A badly burned Lord Hawthorne demands Adam be arrested for the attack against him. As Ralph and Cynthia try to find a way to protect him, Simla is devastated by an earthquake.

10.00 Gogglebox. Capturing the households' instant reactions to what they are watching on TV from the comfort of their own sofas. (R)

11.05 Film: Insidious: Chapter 2. (2013)

1.05 Embarrassing Bodies Down Under. (R) **2.00** The People Next Door. (R) **2.55** Come Dine with Me. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Peppa Pig. **6.05** Bananas in Pyjamas. (R) **6.20** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **6.30** Bob the Builder. (R) **6.45** Tickety Toc. (R) **6.55** Zack and Quack. (R) **7.05** Roobarb and Custard Too. (R) **7.15** Make Way for Noddy. (R) **7.25** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.40** Little Princess. (R) **7.55** Pip Ahoy! (R) **8.10** Blaze and the Monster Machines. (R) **8.40** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **8.50** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **9.05** Toby's Travelling Circus. (R) **9.15** Jelly Jamm. (R) **9.30** LazyTown. (R) **9.55** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. **10.30** The Championship: Football League Tonight. (R) **11.30** Goal Rush: Football League Tonight. (R) **12.00** The Gadget Show. (R) **1.00** Ben Fogle: New Lives in the Wild UK. (R) **2.00 Film:** Eight Below. (2006) Disney canine adventure, starring Paul Walker. **4.20 Film:** The Haunted Mansion. (2003) Comedy, starring Eddie Murphy.

6.00 Now That's Funny! A collection of internet-sourced videos with a family friendly hook, featuring failed celebrations and dinosaur attacks. Last in the series.

7.00 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. Agents Paul and Steve face a moral dilemma in South London, when they find out the tenant they have been instructed to evict is on his way to a funeral. (R)

8.00 Penn & Teller: Fool Us in Vegas. This week's acts include a horrifying performance using a needle and thread, some unusual card tricks, and a mentalist illusion using a phone book and a sword.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 Film: The Town. (2010) Premiere. A thief takes a bank manager hostage while he and his gang make their getaway, only to later learn she lives in the same neighbourhood as him. As FBI agents close in, he tries to befriend her to make sure she cannot identify him, but as he falls in love with her, he considers changing his ways – risking the fury of his unstable partner in crime. Drama, directed by and starring Ben Affleck. With Rebecca Hall and Jeremy Renner. Edited for language.

11.25 Film: Hancock. (2008) A PR executive decides to transform the image of a drunken superhero whose careless crime-fighting often does more harm than good. Comedy, starring Will Smith.

1.10 SuperCasino. **3.10** The Tube: Going Underground. (R) **4.00** Wildlife SOS. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Placido Domingo at the BBC **8.00** Pappano's Classical Voices **9.00** Horizon: Solar Storms – The Threat to Planet Earth **10.00** The Sky at Night **10.30** Mission to Mars: A Horizon Special **11.30** Cosmonauts: How Russia Won the Space Race **1.00** The Bridge: Fifty Years Across the Forth **2.00** The World's Most Beautiful Eggs: The Genius of Carl Faberge **3.00** Placido Domingo at the BBC **4.00** Close

ITV2
4.35 FYI Daily **4.40 Film:** Mr Bean's Holiday (2007) **5.25** Britain's Got Talent **6.50** Britain's Got More Talent **7.55 Film:** The Wedding Planner (2001) **8.55** FYI Daily **9.00 Film:** The Wedding Planner (2001) **10.00** Family Guy **11.55** American Dad! **12.55** The Cleveland Show **1.50** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.15** Pixie Lott: The Hot Desk **2.25** Teleshopping **5.55** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3
1.55 FYI Daily **2.00 Film:** Clockwise (1986) **2.55** Agatha Christie's Marple **4.55** Midsomer Murders **7.00** Doc Martin **8.00** The Cruise Ship **8.30** Royal Stories **9.00** Great Estates of Scotland **10.15 Film:** Changeling (2008) **11.15** FYI Daily **11.20 Film:** Changeling (2008) **1.05** The Kindness of Strangers **2.25** Wycliffe **3.20** May the Best House Win **5.00** On the Buses **5.30** Judge Judy **5.50** ITV3 Nightscreen

ITV4
3.40 FYI Daily **3.45 Film:** The Secret War of Harry Frigg (1967) **4.50 Film:** The Far Country (1954) **5.50** FYI Daily **5.55 Film:** The Far Country (1954) **6.55** The Wine Show **8.00 Film:** Open Range (2003) **9.00** FYI Daily **9.05 Film:** Open Range (2003) **10.50 Film:** The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford (2007) **11.50** FYI Daily **11.55 Film:** The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford (2007) **1.55** Hell on Wheels **2.40** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping

E4
2.35 The Goldbergs **4.00** Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **4.10 Film:** Bride Wars (2009) **6.00** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **10.00 Film:** Colombiana (2011) **12.05** The IT Crowd **1.10** The Aliens **2.15** The 100

Film4
1.00 Gulliver's Travels (2010) **2.40** ParaNorman (2012) **4.30** Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events (2004) **6.35** Snow White & the Huntsman (2012) **9.00** The Hunger Games: Catching Fire (2013) **11.45** How I Live Now (2013) **1.50** Riff Raff (1990)

PICK OF THE WEEK

FILM CHOICES

MONDAY
A Teacher's Obsession, Channel 5, 3.20pm
A lacrosse star is kicked off the team until she can improve her grades, leading to a new teacher taking a special interest in helping her – but that interest soon turns disturbing and threatens the girl's entire future. Thriller, starring Molly Hagan. (2015)

TUESDAY
Fatal Performance, Channel 5, 3.20pm
An aspiring actress, working as a waitress, is offered a lucrative contract to impersonate the wife of a businessman during a prestigious reception event in their home. However, she soon learns the devious truth behind the proposal and what seemed like a simple job soon turns into a nightmare scenario. Thriller, starring Nicholle Tom and David Palffy. (2013)

WEDNESDAY
Badge of Betrayal, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A woman discovers her supposedly dead son is still alive, his demise having been faked by her ex-husband as part of an elaborate plot to destroy her life. However, finding the evidence to prove her story turns out to be a difficult challenge. Thriller, starring Julie Benz and Samantha Ferris. (2014)

Transsiberian, Friday, BBC2, 11.05pm

THURSDAY
My Gal Sunday, Channel 5, 3.25pm
The daughter of a secret service agent marries a former politician, and together they set up a private detective agency. She faces a personal case when her parents are abducted and the kidnappers demand the release of an imprisoned hitman, and sets out to identify the mysterious criminals. Crime drama, starring Rachel Blanchard. (2013)

FRIDAY
Transsiberian, BBC2, 11.05pm
American couple Roy and Jessie are heading from China to Moscow on the Transsiberian railway when they befriend fellow travellers Carlos and Abby. However, when Roy fails to board the train following a station stop, Jessie begins to suspect her new travelling companions are harbouring a deadly secret. Thriller, starring Woody Harrelson, Emily Mortimer, Kate Mara and Ben Kingsley. (2008)

There's more to the new case than meets the eye

It's been an incredible year for Suranne Jones. The actress, who first rose to fame as the feisty Karen McDonald in Coronation Street, had the nation hooked with her performance as a woman scorned in the BBC drama Doctor Foster, which earned her a National TV Award and a recent Bafta nomination.

And if that wasn't enough, she also gave birth to her first child last month.

However, any worries that new motherhood would keep her off our screens for a while can be put to rest, as this week she returns in a new three-part special of police drama Scott & Bailey.

It's a project that is close to Suranne's heart – not only did the series give her the role of hot-headed Manchester detective Rachel Bailey, the actress also conceived the idea for the series with her former Corrie co-star Sally Lindsay (who is also returning in the role of Rachel's sister Alison).

The characters of Bailey and her more level-headed colleague Janet Scott (Lesley Sharp) were then developed by award-winning writer Sally Wainwright, who has since gone on to create another acclaimed series about a complicated female cop, Happy Valley.

Over the course of the previous four series, we've seen Scott and Bailey tackle all manner of grisly crimes, while also dealing with their turbulent personal lives, but we're promised that while it may be shorter than usual, this new fifth series is going to test them more than ever.

Executive producer Nicola Shindler says: "We're delighted to be returning to Scott & Bailey with an investigation that will have everlasting consequences for the characters. This series is more ambitious and sinister than ever before and the concept of a three-part story allows us the opportunity to tackle a story of epic scale and ambition."

As regular viewers will remember, the last series ended with the retirement of DCI Gill Murray – and following a 12-month secondment to Vice, Rachel is back in Syndicate 9 and ready to step up to the challenge of becoming acting DI.

Janet is glad to have her mate back, even if she does feel that their friendship has been somewhat neglected – Rachel definitely lost some points when she failed to respond to a text about Janet breaking up with her boyfriend.

The bonding may have to wait though, as the cops look into the gruesome murder of Michael Edgerton. Rachel leads the investigation under the watchful eye of Julie Dodson (Pippa Haywood), but they're not the only ones taking an interest in the case, as a teenage boy watches a clip of the crime on the 'dark net'. It becomes clear that a game is being played – and Syndicate 9 need to find the next victim before the killer does.

Meanwhile, Janet is thrown into turmoil when Taisie (Harriet Waters) is arrested, and for once it looks like Rachel's going to have to use her wisdom and experience to help her friend, rather than the other way around.

Suranne Jones and Lesley Sharp star, Scott & Bailey, Wednesday, ITV, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
Into the Wild with Gordon Buchanan
BBC2, 6.30pm
New series. The film-maker reveals the extent of Scotland's wildlife, taking well-known faces on an adventure in which they observe some of the UK's most iconic species. In the first programme Gordon is joined by Alastair Campbell for a trip to the Western Isles, including the Isle of Mull, where Gordon grew up, and Tiree, where Alastair spent much of his childhood. The pair go in search of elusive otters and discover an unconventional way of attracting seals, while also getting up close with sea eagles and puffins.

TUESDAY
Drive
ITV, 9pm
While we wait for the re-launched Top Gear and Jeremy Clarkson's rival motor show on Amazon, Vernon Kay is doing a fine job of keeping petrolheads happy with this gas-guzzling challenge. Once more he puts eight celebrity racing rookies, including Professor Green, Johnny Vegas and Angus Deayton, through their paces. This time they have to contend with extreme off-road buggies, and tackle and a supersized obstacle course. The two at the back of the pack then face a fight for survival in the Night Race, with the slowest eliminated from the competition

WEDNESDAY
Tonight at the London Palladium
ITV, 8pm
New series. Actor and presenter Bradley Walsh entertains audiences at the Palladium with a variety show featuring stars from music and comedy, as well as a host of speciality acts from around the world. The first edition's line-up of confirmed guests includes Italian classical tenor Andrea Bocelli, singer-songwriter Birdy, and Irish comedian Tommy Tiernan. Plus, there is music from the West End with the cast of Motown the Musical, and a jaw-dropping performance by motorcycle stunt show, The Globe of Death.

Five Star Babies: Inside the Portland Hospital
BBC2, 9pm
An exclusive glimpse inside the UK's only private maternity hospital, where women from Victoria Beckham to the Duchess of York have paid a premium for the ultimate pampered birth. This edition reveals how Portland Hospital's consultants, midwives, chefs and cleaners serve parents, including high-society 'It Girl' Hui, who admits she is afraid of giving birth naturally. Scottish nurse Pat insists that she is not star struck but 'baby struck' as she looks after the newborns of celebrities and royalty, and the Countess of Bradford reveals the impact of her career as a consultant on her social life.

Drive, Tuesday, ITV, 9pm

THURSDAY
Bargain Shop Wars
ITV, 8.30pm
New series. Behind the scenes of Britain's newest bargain chain store, fashion retailer Pep&Co, following staff on both the shop floor and at head office as they take on and try to undercut the big names of the discount fashion world and become the cheapest on the high street. The first episode follows last summer's launch, when £20million was spent in a high-risk rollout of 50 shops across the country. In Corby, shop manager Sue attracts an unexpected visit from a rival, while at head office, a decision is made to ditch the homeware range in favour of a menswear line.

FRIDAY
Henry VIII and His Six Wives
Channel 5, 8pm
New series. A dramatic story in English history, told for the first time from the duelling perspectives of historians Suzannah Lipscomb and Dan Jones. This first episode focuses on Katherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn. For Henry's first love Katherine, this failure to bear a son began an escalating series of events that tested her dignity, her integrity, her faith and her love for her husband. Anne was intelligent, sophisticated and above all ambitious. She and the Henry fell in love and together began to plot Katherine's downfall.

Boomers
BBC1, 9.30pm
Mick returns from his Spanish paradise, minus his young Russian wife. Nigel Planer stars, with Philip Jackson, Alison Steadman, Russ Abbot and Stephanie Beacham.

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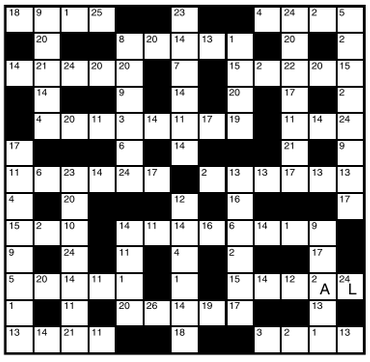
BRAIN GYM No.372

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to start you off.



1	14
2 A	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24 L
12	25
13	26

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
L	N	O	E	M	X	S	B	P	H	F	R	U
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Q	K	I	C	A	Y	T	D	W	V	J	Z	G

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

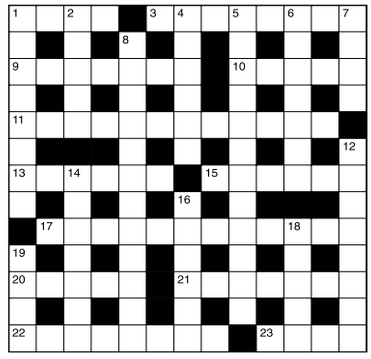
Cryptic Clues:

Across

1. Takes something the wrong way? (4)
3. Settled in temporary accommodation (8)
9. Driver waiting for a chance to pass? (7)
10. Dash back East to do business (5)
11. Fruit for chaperons? (12)
13. Stones used to make attacks (6)
15. Hurry to finish off the bird (6)
17. Don't the fair-minded have them? (4,8)
20. This tree is hardly a firm favourite! (5)
21. At home and being ruthless (7)
22. Perfect all over? (8)
23. Run back to the right (4)

Down

1. One girl I converted to a system of worship (8)
2. It could be well done (5)
4. Treats as a sister, perhaps? (6)
5. It occurs to one later it's the time one should act (12)
6. Possibly it's ale up at a high level (7)
7. It's not written for one to play (4)
8. Enterprises giving less profits? (12)
12. Part of a comedian's material roasted by the critic? (8)
14. Give some point to something (7)
16. A prosperous thing to do (6)
18. Greek pigeon? (5)
19. A little lower on the farm (4)



Quick Clues:

Across

1. Of that kind (4)
3. Amaze (8)
9. Non-professional (7)
10. Droll (5)
11. Agitation (12)
13. Niche (6)
15. Stick together (6)
17. Exaggerated (12)
20. Once more (5)
21. Clash (7)
22. Bony frame-work (8)
23. Tidings (4)

Down

1. Flag (8)
2. Stupid (5)
4. Graze (6)
5. Now and then (12)
6. Plunge into liquid (7)
7. Chop (4)
8. Strong protest (12)
12. Incautious (8)
14. Sturgeon roe (7)
16. Plaster for coating walls (6)
18. Sound (5)
19. Go by (4)

Sudoku

		5		3	2			
3			1		4	7		9
		4					2	
	4				1	3		5
	7				3		4	
9		2	5				1	7
	8				7			
		7	3			2		6
2			6	8		9		

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

2	1	5	3	7	6	8	4	9
7	8	9	2	1	4	6	5	3
3	4	6	9	5	8	1	7	2
6	3	8	7	4	2	5	9	1
5	9	2	8	3	1	4	6	7
1	7	4	5	6	9	3	2	8
9	6	1	4	8	7	2	3	5
4	5	7	1	2	3	9	8	6
8	2	3	6	9	5	7	1	4

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 6 Make out; 7 Diver; 9 Tally; 10 Combine; 12 Extravagant; 14 Piece of cake; 18 Driller; 19 Usurp; 21 Round; 22 Come off. Down: 1 Natal; 2 Reflex; 3 Tun; 4 Kit-bag; 5 Leonine; 8 Convict; 11 Trooper; 13 Vitriol; 15 Colony; 16 Kismet; 17 Drift; 20 Hoe. QUICK - Across: 6 Injured; 7 Marry; 9 Demur; 10 Disease; 12 Clandestine; 14 Intimidates; 18 Callous; 19 Speak; 21 Petty; 22 Account. Down: 1 Enter; 2 Mutual; 3 Den; 4 Lament; 5 Present; 8 Liberal; 11 Antique; 13 Enraged; 15 Inlets; 16 Employ; 17 Gaunt; 20 Act.

Thinking space

Quiz

1. Into which planet did fragments of comet SL9 crash?
2. How is the aurora borealis also known?
3. Who was the actress mother of former Tory party chairman Jeremy Hanley?
4. The Schick test is used to determine immunity to which disease?
5. Which metal forms rust?
6. What was the Democratic Republic of the Congo formerly known as?
7. What came between the Stone and Iron Ages?
8. Which Spanish golfer, three times Open champion, had his career cut short by arthritis?
9. Which creature did Edgar Allan Poe have say 'Nevermore'?
10. In which city is the hill Arthur's Seat?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Roberto Baggio; 2 Cerebellum; 3 Fox; 4 Zimbabwean; 5 St Lawrence; 6 Jethro; 7 Shelley; 8 Juliana; 9 Pierre Proudhon; 10 Giraffe.

Niner: OVERSIGHT

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

9436 gives a metal,
7148 gives a second metal,
3256 gives a third metal.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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Stourbridge Chronicle Thursday, April 7, 2016

Bathing beauty – the Roman Baths with their steaming water and a maze of spa rooms

Modern spa resort with views of Bath Abbey

Claim to fame – the magnificent Royal Crescent is just one of Bath's many architectural jewels

Elegant opulence – Grove Lodge in Bath

Enjoy a relaxing weekend in Bath with lots of attractions on tap

By Mark Drew

A GOOD word from Bill Bryson can make or break a tourist attraction. So imagine the sighs of relief among the powers-that-be at Bath's Roman Baths when the travel writer came to the conclusion that he quite liked them.

In fact Bill didn't just like this example of living, flowing, history, he loved it. So much so that he agreed to record his musings as he went to explore.

The result is one of the most absorbing guided tours you are ever likely to find. Yes, it involves grasping an outsized mobile phone to your ear, but it's worth the time and trouble to listen and, contrary to expectations, makes the experience more intimate and real.

In fact there are three commentaries to choose from, the wry observations of Bill to the expert word of TV historian Alice Roberts and finally a charming simplified version for children.

The Roman Baths, with its steaming waters and fascinating maze of ancient spa rooms, is the obvious place to start. It places Bath's origins within the context of its relatively more recent past. And, as Bryson himself observes, the rooftop view it affords of the baths, cast in the shadow of Bath Abbey and enveloped by the sandstone city, is really something to behold.

Bill would, no doubt, also thoroughly approve of Bath's Grove Lodge, a luxury bed and breakfast an easy 20-minute stroll from the centre of the city and my stay for the weekend. Owners Giovanni and Mary Baiano took it over a couple of years ago and have transformed it into a laid-back but incredibly stylish resting place.

Appropriately, a Roman bust greets you as you arrive. There are three spacious suites, Georgian, Roman and Chinese. Set in an imposing Georgian town house, guests are treated to their own suite and are delivered a five-star breakfast on a silver tray.

Rugby

Grove Lodge sits opposite Bath Rugby Club's training ground. This is a city where the locals live and breathe rugby. This season has been a disappointment by Bath's standards. But it remains a sport uniting a city that, despite the melting pot of nationalities caused by the influx of tourists, has a feeling of community.

Bath's centre is relatively small, which makes it ideally suited to exploring on foot. There are lots of architectural landmarks in this city, tucked into a valley around 12 miles from Bristol. The magnificent Royal Crescent is Britain's most famous row of terraces. It sits close to Royal Victoria Park, where families picnic in the summer and that boasts one of the country's best playgrounds.

A five-minute stroll takes you The Circus, another example of Georgian splendour where you can wander as Jane Austen once did. And Bath Abbey is just splendid.

Bath's Achilles heel used to be food. In a city with two universities it lacked culinary breadth. That has changed in recent years and today there are endless places to eat and to match all budgets.

And, if you want to spend the day as Bathonians used to, the Thermae Bath Spa allows you to eat a light lunch in your fluffy white robe before a steam room sweat or a swim in its spectacular rooftop pool.

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Charming cottage sited down by the riverside

A CHARMING Grade II listed cottage close to the riverside and in a courtyard setting with a garage, Trow Cottage, 30 Lax Lane, Bewdley has deceptively spacious accommodation.

It is now for sale through Allan Morris at a reduced price of £199,000 with no chain.

It has an attractive front stable door, entrance hall, dual aspect lounge, a dining kitchen with stable-type door to the rear patio and courtyard area, first floor bathroom with a white suite, Jack 'n' Jill bathroom and two bedrooms (one having previously been two singles).

The delightful courtyard setting to the rear is a wonderful enclosed haven with mature plants and shrubs and shaped lawns, communal seating area and winding paved pathways. A paved patio area and lawn are laid against the cottage. Call 01299 400555 or visit www.allan-morris.co.uk

Extended detached has £345,000 tag

THIS beautifully presented and extended three-bedroomed detached has been finished to exacting standards with a stylish décor and modern kitchen and bathroom fittings.

With views of the church, 9 Round Hill Avenue, Pedmore it is for sale through The Lee, Shaw Partnership at £345,000.

With a single garage and carport and a driveway, it has a luxury bathroom and kitchen, a reception hall and guest WC, a large lounge and a second L-shaped reception room, three bedrooms and a bathroom and gardens.

For further information call 01384 396066 or visit www.leeshaw.com

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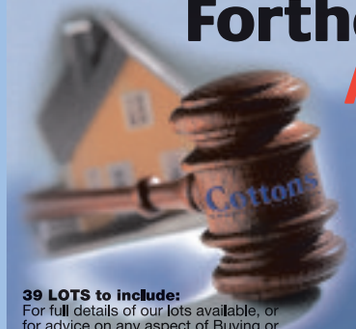

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THE RAILWAY TAVERN PUBLIC HOUSE. 39 BUXTON ROAD, DUDLEY

Impressive detached is in a highly popular area

AN impressive detached home in a highly popular area within a short distance of Sedgley town centre in Gospel End Road, Dudley is for sale through Skitts at £345,000.

The property is extremely well maintained.

With good sized family accommodation and benefits from central heating, double glazing, two reception rooms, a family bathroom plus an en-suite, ample off road parking plus garage and a private and pleasant rear garden.

In more detail the lounge has a coal-effect gas fire and the dining room has a serving hatch to the kitchen which has a cooker hood and ceramic wall tiles and ceiling spot lights. For further information call 01902 686868 or visit www.skitts.net

Traditional semi in desirable location

A LOVELY family home in a desirable location, this much improved traditional semi in High Haden Crescent, Cradley Heath includes a large through lounge/dining room with a log burner and an extended kitchen.

Pleasantly decorated throughout, it is for sale through Hicks Hadley at £190,000.

It features a garage, driveway, gas central heating, double glazing and a long rear garden with a patio area with long lawn, further patio area and shrub borders, a porch, a reception hall, a large lounge/dining room with a bay window and patio doors to the rear, an extended fitted kitchen, three good sized bedrooms and a bathroom with a corner bath with a shower over. Call 0121 5856667 or visit www.hickshadley.com

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Stourbridge Chronicle Thursday, April 7, 2016

A4 Avant is bigger, lighter and quieter

By John Griffiths

Don't be deceived by appearances – there IS a new Audi on the road, even if it takes an experienced eye to tell the 2016 A4 Avant from its predecessor,

In fact, this latest estate version of the popular compact executive car is all new – new platform, new powertrains, and new technology.

It's bigger, a lot lighter and quieter – three areas in which it goes to the top of its class – as well as being up to 21 per cent more fuel efficient.

So why, when you have what is essentially an all-new car, hasn't Audi done more with the external styling? Well several reasons spring to mind, not least the incredibly strong brand image the company has with buyers – one look and you (and everyone else) knows what it is and what it means.

There have been some tweaks, not least of which is improved aerodynamics: yes it looks particularly sporty by estate standards but the real reason behind that shape is to reduce drag and therefore fuel consumption. That's particularly true of the test car, a 2.0 litre turbo diesel Ultra Sport with 148bh), the most economical of the new Avant family. It sits lower on its standard sports suspension as a further means of reducing drag, plus it's fitted with low rolling resistance tyres. It's also one of the more affordable Avant models at £30,815, in a range which runs from £27,300 to £40,350.

One of Audi's headline selling points for the new A4 Avant is it's class-leading position in the space race, against the opposition. It has 505 litres of cargo space with five people on board, rising to a whopping 1,510 litres if the rear seats are folded down. Since estates are all about practicality, an electrically operated tailgate and retractable load cover are standard. There is also significantly more head and shoulder room for those in the front, while three adults shouldn't be much of a squeeze in the back.

As well as a new platform, the Avant has a range of reworked engines and transmissions, including a six-speed manual and two auto options, designed to increase efficiency. The 148bhp test car's official figure (according to lab tests) is 70.6mpg which equates to a low CO2 rating of 104g/km and a benefit in kind liability of 18 per cent – both impressive figures for the business user aiming to keep their tax liability down. My 'real world' test produced a still very acceptable figure of 55mpg.

As the lowest powered version of the new Avant, the test car's acceleration of 0 to 62mph in 9.2 seconds is still far from sluggish. It pulls strongly from low revs, but, with a car designed for economy, the cruising ratios are relatively high and you need to change down for quick A-road overtaking.

The second dividend is that, combined with the sports suspension standard on Ultra models, the Avant's handling is sharper, with a quicker 'turn in' with dynamics which wouldn't disgrace a sports saloon.

Warning

Another fuel-saving and comfort aid is the optional 'predictive efficiency' computer system, which uses satnav data to warn you in advance of, for example, bends and traffic signs which might not yet be visible. You can then slow gently, avoiding hard last minute braking and acceleration which have a cost in fuel (and ride cofort for passengers).

The test car was fitted with Audi's proven 'Drive Select' system which allows you to configure the throttle response and weighting of the steering to half a dozen settings, including dynamic, comfort and efficiency. I found that, for the majority of the time, the 'auto' setting was just right although improved damping in the 'comfort' setting did actually improve ride quality on some of our bumpier b-roads.

The test car was fitted with the optional (for £1,510) leather and alcantara upholstery, which is hard-wearing and further improved the ambience of the already light and airy interior.

The dash and centre console exude quality, and are clear and uncluttered despite the plethora of modern systems packed into this particular A4.

Many secondary functions (media, radio, Drive Select and so on) are control by a couple of chunky switches and a rotary 'mouse) which falls easy to hand in conjunction with the large central display screen. There are also repeat controls on the steering wheel.

The adaptive cruise control on the steering column can be operated with one finger and is far more practical in today's traffic conditions than an older 'cruise only' system. It keeps you a safe distance from vehicles in front, braking and accelerating to your set speed as necessary and when conditions allow. I found it a useful, and relaxing, driver aid particularly on motorways.

The central screen is also Audi's latest multi-media interface, first seen on the upmarket A6 and A8 models, running the audio and connectivity systems. The driver and front passenger and individual air conditioning controls, and even those in the rear can set their own climate.

There is a full range of safety systems, which combined with the new A4's basic construction and materials earned it a maximum EuroNCAP safety rating.

With its class-leading load space, the new A4 Avant passes the practicality test for a modern estate car without sacrificing any of its elegant, even sporting style. It's also lighter, more aerodynamic and more efficient than ever, as well as offering some of the most advanced technology available to today's motorist.

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Stacks up nicely on paper and on road

By Ian Donaldson

IF you look at the figures that estate cars boast about it's not hard to spot who takes top spot in the sales charts.

Among smaller estates (that's a relative term these days) the Skoda Octavia rules the roost, topping the Ford Focus and Vauxhall Astra. And with their rear seats fold flat, that's the same order they make when load space is measured.

If style matters, then practicality matters more when you've a family and all their stuff to move around, it seems.

Still, you'd never call the latest Astra estate – or Sports Tourer in Vauxhall speak – a noticeably small car. It measures only a little more on the outside than before but that brings more headroom for front seat passengers, extra legroom in the rear and a usefully bigger boot.

Clever design (a lighter car needs smaller brakes and wheels, for instance) brings benefit in economy and emissions, helped too by this Sports Tourer being the most streamlined estate ever from the griffin brand.

This latest Astra Sports Tourer (built, like the hatch at Ellesmere Port in Cheshire) has a range of engines that mix better economy (and less weight) and emissions than before, with the 110 horsepower diesel achieving 83mpg in official tests and a modest 89g/km from the tailpipe into the bargain.

Higher up the food chain we reach Vauxhall's newish Bi-Turbo diesels, all with 1.6 litres and up to 160 horsepower, enough for 137mph top speed and acceleration near identical to the bigger 2.0 litre engine it displaces.

Confidence

So, the new Sports Tourer is bigger inside and more economical than before. That ought to give Vauxhall confidence as it sets out to topple the upstart Skoda in the sales chart.

But perhaps the biggest weapon of all is a range that costs less than before; in one case (the posh Elite) there's a £1,870 saving.

Of course, list prices at the part of the market where Vauxhall operates are only a starting point as fleet manager start their negotiations, but they can now begin from a lower base.

Prices start at £16,585 with the SRi and SRi Nav versions (£19,885 to £24,090) the likely most popular, taking 40 per cent of sales. There's good news on insurance too, with all the newcomers occupying a lower and cheaper slot.

Range highlights, says Vauxhall, include the 1.0-litre three-cylinder Turbo Start/Stop ecoFLEX model priced from £17,285.

With a five-speed automatic transmission, the same model achieves 97g/km CO2 emissions. That means no road tax – and a smug expression on the driver's face, no doubt.

The range-topping 200 horsepower petrol 1.6-litre is available in SRi trim priced from £21,725. Diesels includes the 1.6-litre Whisper Diesel with 105 horsepower (prices start at £18,785) that achieves 83.1mpg and CO2 emissions of 89g/km.

On some versions of the new Sports Tourer there is the option of adding OnStar which includes a live link to someone sitting in Luton who will assist with everything, from help after an accident to asking if you're OK should the car tell them an airbag has gone off, something it does automatically.

If the car seems to stack up nicely on paper (where, you suspect many decisions over choice will be made for this workhorse), there remains the question of how the car drives.

Well, it looks the business inside. Pretty businesslike too, with lots of black surfaces and a clean look to the dashboard, where the current trend (craze?) to eliminate buttons in favour of a big touchscreen has been restrained enough to keep things conveniently manageable.

No complaints either about the twin-turbo diesel, which was quiet at work and pulled strongly, helped along by a pleasantly precise gearchange.

A dash readout of 59mpg at journey's end will please both driver and fleet manager too.

TESTED

Vauxhall Astra Sports Tourer SRI Nav 1.6CDTi

Engine: Diesel engine, 158bhp
Warranty: Three years, 60,000 miles
Economy: The Astra Sports Tourer can do 67.3mpg
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lost & found

LOST
Black cat, green eyes, male neutered, no collar, no chip, little piece missing from top left ear.
Last seen Bescot Crescent on Thursday, March 24.
07718 436794.

LOST
PATTERDALE TERRIER
Completely black, docked tail, two years of age, lost Wednesday, March 16, (evening) Fowlers Playing Fields but may have travelled. Wearing green and yellow collar, microchipped. Reward offered **07773 100391.**

LOST—Iraq Passport, possibly Wolverhampton Town Centre. Please call 07477 538911.

MISSING—since March 23, Ginger male cat, Tettenhall Wood area. Please call 07526 275289.

religious notices

christadelphian

BIBLE TRUTHS The Flood. April 10, at 6pm, The Community Centre, High Street, Kingswinford. Or write to The Dawn (ref:KCE) 5 Station Road, Carlton, Notts. NG4 3AT for free information pack or ring 01384 886544 for recorded message.

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5 Business & Farming

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6 Property

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£4,100 ono.
07843 745278.

VOLVO C70 Collection 04, 2.0 Auto, 50,000 miles, FSH, full MoT, metallic black, £2,250. 01902 661513. 07831 277719.

VW PASSAT 1.9 TD SALOON
2006. Above average condition. Dealer FSH. MoT. Reluctant genuine sale. First to see will buy.
£2750ono.
01384 621507 / 07535 696469.

cars under £1500

ADVERTISERS ARE REMINDED
that the Business Advertisements (Disclosure) Order of 1977 requires that advertisements must clearly differentiate between Private and Trade.

AUDI A3 1.9TDi, 2003, blue, good condition, any trial, £1,375. 07714 019381.

BMW 325Ti SPORT 52 plate, MoT April, sold as seen. Offers around £700. 07814 459851.

CHEVROLET LACETTI SX, Silver, 07, 46,600k 7months MoT, recently serviced. Bargain £800ono. 07854 938883 or 07398 991971.

CHRYSLER PT CRUISER 2005, black, 67,000 miles, MoT'd, excellent condition. £1,500 ono. 07428 493924.

CITROEN C3 1360cc, 2003, good condition inside and out, 1 owner, 62,000 miles, 11 months MoT, £950. 07578 757592.

CITROEN PICASSO 2002, 8 months MoT, 128,000 miles, clean and tidy, new clutch. £595 ono. 01902 306855 / 07751 473301.

FORD FIESTA 1.3 2003,12 months MoT, 69,000 miles, metallic silver, abs, ideal first car, must be seen. £895 ono. 07947 598310

FORD FIESTA 1.4. Diesel, 1996. P reg., MoT, Beige, Low miles. £250. o.n.o. 07908 011959.

FORD FIESTA 2004, TDCi, 73,000 miles, FSH, EM, EW, CL, AC, alloys, grey, MoT April 17, good condition, £695. 07941 500949.

FORD FOCUS Estate, Mot Dec 2016, good runner, £200ono. 07966 295135.

FORD KA Silver, 2005, 12 months MoT, 86,000 miles. £650 ono. 07923 132859.

HONDA ACCORD V-tec, Sport, blue,1.8, 4dr, MoT July 2016, 131k, excellent condition, £750 ono. 07930 374986.

HYUNDAI SANTA FE
4 wheel drive, 2004, 2.0 diesel, MoT, good condition for year, recent service and cam belt changed, tow bar, parking sensors,
£1, 450 ono.
07703 548050. 07773 354042.

cars under £1500

NISSAN MICRA, 1996, 61,000 miles, silver, auto, four door, petrol, £325. 01902 741316.

JAGUAR S-TYPE 3.0 V6 AUTOMATIC
2001, 92,000 miles, MoT Aug, full leather, excellent condition.
£850
07873 218280.

MAZDA TRIBUTE 54 V6, spares and repairs, good engine, gear box and body, poor interior. £250 ono. 07816 821960. Worth looking at.

MITSUBISHI PININ 2001, Elegance, 2.0, very good condition, MoT, lots of history. £850 ono. 01562 632756.

RENAULT CLIO EXTREME 2002, 62,000 Miles, Black, Good runner, all new tyres.£250 ono 07834243889

ROVER 75 1.8, 51 reg, MoT, 85,000 miles, A1 condition. £700. 01902 782601.

ROVER 75 CLASSIC V6, auto, W reg, 4 door, 2.0, MoT, blue, 85k, CD, alloys, excellent condition, £295 no offers. 07979 784585.

SKODA OCTAVIA 1.6
2003, 117,000 miles, grey, abs, air bag, MoT to Sept 2016, central locking, pas, alloys, stereo. Recent timing belt and water pump.
£525 ono.
07789 172467.

TOYOTA AVENSIS T3-X 2005, 164,000 miles, olive green, FSH, MoT, diesel, alloys, cambelt at 150K, £999 ono 07405 196046.

TOYOTA LucidaX, 2.2, Preg, diesel, auto, grey, 7 seats, immobiliser, good condition, 102k, £500 ono. 07791 550578. 01902 339813.

TOYOTA RAV 4 03, 2.0 MoT June 22, 2016, good condition, bargain, £1,200. 01902 656292.

VAUXHAL CORSA 1.2SXi 2005, silver, 11 mnths MoT, petrol, alloys, all new tyres, EM EW, good condition. £850 ono. 07931 402895.

VAUXHALL AGILA Auto, 1.2i, 2012, 5-dr, 1 lady owner, cornflower blue, 12 months MoT, FSH, reliable. £3,900 ono. 07954 433834.

classic cars

MGB GT, 1968
Yellow, 38,000 genuine miles, part restoration by last owners. Valued @ £7,000, Sell for £6,750 ono.
For more information call 07801 062339.

MINI MAYFAIR 1985, 998cc, good condition, refurbished engine, 7 mths tax, 6 mths MoT, £3,500ono. 07518 539892.

WANTED, CLASSIC Cars. Private cash buyer.Instant cash settlement. Any age. Any condition. 01630 652993 or 07773 462797.

commercial vehicles

CITROEN BERLINGO 1.9 DIESEL
2002, MoT October 2016, 17ins alloys with new tyres, 190,000 miles, very good condition, new clutch and timing belt, ready to use. **£750 ono.**
Telephone 07905 432569.

driving tuition

Homer's
10 Hours £89! Five Hours £50!
2 Hours £20! All Areas Covered
ADI/PDI REQUIRED. Gift vouchers available for £10
07432 458100 / 01562 870050
01384 234954 / 0121 5640090
01902 580065 www.homersdrivingschool.co.uk

scrap vehicles

OUR ADVERTISERS are reminded that it is an offence under the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 to buy scrap cars/metal for cash.

MCB
TOP PRICES PAID FOR ALL SCRAP CARS, VANS, BIKES, CLASSICS
Tel: 01902 408176
1000's of parts available at all times
MONMORE RD. WV1 2TZ

A BETTER PRICE
for scrap or damaged cars and commercials. Spares for sale.
NINE LOCKS VEHICLE DISMANTLERS LTD
Brierley Hill 01384 76566 or 70553. Evenings 75397. DY5 3JZ.

vehicles wanted

MEDIUM SIZED PICK-UP OR LARGE VAN WANTED MoT'd. Telephone 07754 121452.

spares & accessories

clutches / brakes / gearboxes

A CLUTCH CHANGE MOBILE
30 yrs experience
ALL AREAS COVERED
Call Bob
01384 251328 or 07972 169554 anytime
For Example:
Citroen C1, C2, C3
Hyundai 110
Toyota Yaris
Clios & Micras
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vehicles wanted

alan reed cars
Used cars wanted for cash
Top prices paid. HP settled.
Buyer could call.
01562 711083 / 07831 245313

CROWN MOTORS guarantee best price for your unwanted cars/vans. 07903 549849, 01902 597035.

9 Local Information

public & legal notices

LEGAL / PUBLIC NOTICES
For convenience you may fax any advertising requirements to
Marie Hogg on 01902 713146 or email marie.hogg@expressandstar.co.uk
(remember to include a name/contact number for confirmation of receipt)

10 Personals

personal

GENTLEMAN 70'S
Tall, very smart, fit, full of life, young at heart, genuine, honest and sincere, seeking a lady of similar qualities, non smoker, to develop a relationship full of all the good things in life.
Box Number P20295 , Express and Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

MALE, 52
SLIM, 5FT 10INS
Black hair, brown eyes and tanned.
Loving, kind, caring, sincere, easy going, romantic, sensitive, spiritual, friendly.
Own business.
Looking for a female soulmate to share my life with.
Age unimportant.
Single Moms welcome.
Box Number P20293, Express and Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton. WV1 1ES.

personal

WIDOWER
Own house and car, loves music and dancing, holidays in UK and abroad.
Would like a relationship with lady with similar interests, aged 60 to early 70's. I have a lot of love to give to the right lady.
Box Number P20294 , Express and Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton. WV1 1ES .

sports clubs

PENN COLTS EAST U8'S
Are looking for talented Players to join its successful side.
We are looking for two Players to improve us further, we'd love to hear from you if you have a budding Colt in your midst, currently in year 3, have a passion for the game with supportive Parents.
Ben on 07833 463195 or email ben@smallmanmedia.com

general

HAVE YOU CHECKED your advertisement today? We would respectfully remind advertisers that it is their responsibility to inform the publishers of any mistakes or inaccuracies on the first day of publication.

CREMATION PLOT in Bilston Cemetery, for two people. We are open to offers. 01902 564673.

CREMATION PLOT in Bilston Cemetery, for two people. We are open to offers. 01902 564673.

Express & Star

DATING

YOUR regional dating service, run by the dating experts who have been established since 1990. ***REAL people in YOUR region***

Try it.. You'll love it!

Here's how to use your dating service ...

To ***Place*** your advert call:

0844 381 5936

and follow the simple instructions

To ***Place*** your ad by text

Simply text **REG** followed by your first name, date of birth, area and your advert (max 155 characters) and send to **80098** **FREE** Standard Network rates apply.

YOU can now ***Date ONLINE*** or via your mobile just visit:

http://dating.expressandstar.com

To ***Reply*** to members call:

0906 500 3955

calls cost £1.55 per min plus your phone company's access charge.

Have the adverts 6-digit box no written down and do ***key-it-in promptly*** when asked. Don't forget to leave contact details for replies.

To ***Reply*** by text:

Text... **REPLY26** (leave space) box number (leave space) and then enter your message & send to **80098** eg: **REPLY26** 123456 **hi get in touch...** then send to **80098** Successfully received messages cost £1.50 per per SMS received (Max 160 characters). You must exchange 7 messages each before you can swap contact details. Messages may be moderated for your safety and security.

Been left a message? ***Pickup*** your replies on:

0906 500 3957

calls cost £1.55 per min plus your phone company's access charge.

THE biggest UK on-line database of 17 million UK REAL users waiting to meet ***you.. visit..*** **http://dating.expressandstar.com**

Single Women

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received.

REBECCA tall slim elegant long legged romantic, sensual, professional, lots to offer, seeks similar male who also appreciates the finer things in life, **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421583**

KATIE 35yrs, slender well educated brunette seeks no strings mutual pleasure with gent 40+ Must be discreet, married or single. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3003 Box: 419673**

CARING honest female, WLTM genuine guy for LTR in Glos/Bristol area. **Text only Mailbox: 4209465**

JANE, young 41, very broadminded seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun, any age, no time wasters ACA. **Tel: No: 0906 515 3011 Box: 409715**

SUE, 39, slim feminine brunette, caring, fun loving, independent, no ties, OHAC, loves cooking, WLTM willing male to get to know and spend quality times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421617**

LUCY first time advertiser, 32yrs, tall slim blonde airline worker, seeks discreet gent, any status for casual fling. Looks/age unimportant. **Tel: 0906 515 3027 Box: 420237**

DONNA 42yrs young separated female who is ready to start dating again, bubbly, attractive, blonde and raring to get going, come on don't keep me waiting! **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421567**

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. **Tel: 0906 515 3019 Box: 413399**

SARA, 39, home owner, likes animals, tattoos and texting, looking for friendship hopefully leading to more. Get in touch! **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421455**

KAREN, 42yrs, attractive and broadminded, seeks no strings fun with chap any age, must be discreet. **Tel: 0906 515 3039 Box: 407953**

ATTRACTIVE, slim woman looking for fun and excitement with guy 35-40 pls text. **Text only Mailbox: 5419773**

ABIGAIL, 33yrs slim sophisticated brunette seeks no strings mutual pleasures with a discreet experienced man, married or single. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3015 Box: 421339**

TINA, 43, young looking attractive single female looking for love, with similar lonely heart resorting to advertising in the hope of finding love. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421613**

EMILY, mature well educated lady, blonde and smart and broadminded seeks gent any age for no strings fun. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3023 Box 421375**

MANDY, 45, friendly outgoing arty female who loves wining/dining, looking for male to sweep me off my feet, take me out and make me feel special, reciprocation guaranteed. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421503**

ROSIE, genuine well educated, sophisticated lady 29yrs WLTM fun loving chap, any age for chats, lunch, discreet meetings. **Box: 4124710 Text only**

SALLY 37 blonde, blue eyed, who loves life, music, letting my hair down, looking for similar flirty guy for enjoy TLC and life. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421451**

JAYNE, bored housewife, 42yrs looking for someone to spice up her days with some fun and jokes. **Box: 4155728 Text only**

JESSICA 39, attractive fit/healthy blonde female enjoys travel, music, the Arts, gym, the good things in life, seeking love, laughter, LTR with similar male, 40-55yrs. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421563**

HI I am Lorna 39yr old slim female, 5ft 5ins, many interests, loves music, seeking romantic male to enjoy special times together, hopefully leading to true love. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421413**

JAYNE, 42, very pretty brunette, stylish, fun, loves the 60's, fine wine/restaurants, seeks professional gent for mutual life enhancement. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421311**

JO attractive 30's brunette who loves life, WLTM up for it male to enjoy nights in/out, weekends away, fun times and hopefully more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421259**

MONICA 35, very attractive, gorgeous curvy figure, WLTM nice male who wants to get to know a genuine black beauty to wine, dine, romance hopefully leading to more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421241**

46YR old Asian lady looking for friendship maybe more with white male 50+ **Text only to Mailbox: 5404865**

TRISH, 45, tall slim young/good looking GSOH, professional, solvent, OHAC, affectionate and loves TLC, WLTM male who also likes to be in a loving relationship, 39-50yrs. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421137**

LOUISE 35, loves meals out, WLTM tallish, considerate mature male who is not frightened to express themselves and enjoy life. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421135**

ANGELA, 42, green eyed dark haired feminine lady who enjoys walking and keeping fit, seeking lonely kind gentleman for good times and more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421115**

MARGARET 39, dark hair/eyed attractive petite divorcee, new to area and looking to start a new life, WLTM child friendly male, single dad welcome. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421129**

ANNA, 41, new to single life seeking caring professional male for no strings fun, attention and laughter. Life is too short, lets enjoy it! Call me. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421127**

HONEST sincere affectionate nurse, 48, OHAC, WLTM child friendly male/single dad for dates, chats, laughter and more. Any age. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421111**

SUSANNAH, 48, curvy female, romantic, warm and cuddly, seeks similar kind male for a loving relationship with lots of cuddles and kisses. Looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417341**

MICHELLE 39yr old nurse, slim, petite, blonde, blue eyes, looking to enjoy life with similar romantic, caring guy. Single dad welcome. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420791**

DEBS lonely 40's female with no ties, GSOH, N/S, loves the simple things in life looking for similar soul mate to be happy together with. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420729**

JULIE, 47, blonde brown eyes, size 12, varied interests, loves cuddling, kissing and showing affection, seeks similar energetic male friend for TLC. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420357**

LILY, genuine lady looking for a genuine man. I like cosy nights in and am a smoker. **Text only mailbox no: 5372466**

JANE, 47, voluptuous female, long hair, brown eyes, generous curves, would love to spend cosy nights in with that special male. Age/looks unimportant, **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417985**

SAMANTHA pretty brunette, very busty 36, intelligent, independent with a real lust for life, seeks big-hearted stocky male. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420599**

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received.

YVONNE, single mum, happy with life, but would like to meet someone to share fun times with. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420269**

48 year old, slim, green eyed female, n/s, likes meals out, local theatre, live local bands, nights in, looking for a gentleman, 48-52, for friendship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420839**

FEMALE, 37, new to area, would like to meet nice trustworthy man, for friendship hopefully more. **Text only to mailbox: 5392585**

BLACK lady seeks white male over 60, any location, for friendship and hopefully a lot more. **Text only to Mailbox no: 4256384**

CAROL 37 attractive slim blonde, curves in all the right places, nice personality, good company, looking for caring man for fun times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416287**

BEV 30yr old curvy attractive female, likes music, travel, animals, cosy nights in front of a log fire, looking for affectionate male for good times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420715**

SUE, 46, confident professional, sporty/active, seeking sensitive interesting guy for intimate evenings in with great food and conversations. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420701**

CAROLINE, 42yrs, slim attractive blonde, varied interests and solvent, WLTM honest male of any age. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420685**

CHRIS, 67, brunette, cuddly, WLTM caring, kind gentleman, for days out, meals out, walks etc and for just being together. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420667**

TRISH, 44, tall slim young/good looking GSOH, professional, solvent, OHAC, affectionate and loves TLC, WLTM male who also likes to be in a loving relationship, 39-50yrs. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420601**

MADDIE extremely passionate female 37, seeks reliable male to enjoy the finer things in life and tactile relationship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420563**

CHRIS, 40, attractive slim sophisticated redhead, seeking male 30-50's to relax with and get to know. Discretion assured. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420491**

SALLY, 46, slim attractive feisty redhead, intelligent, easygoing, WLTM similar male for friendship and more, looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420475**

LOUISE, 47, youthful looking female looking for spontaneous male to put some love and lust back into life. Call me. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420445**

ALEXA 49 - slim, attractive, long-haired music loving female, with many interests including dining out, the arts, photography WLTM similar male. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5345662**

CHLOE pretty single female 36yrs, dark hair/eyes, slim build, very lonely and looking for reliable discreet male for mutual companionship maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420359**

ANN,38, very attractive female, N/S, positive attitude to life, WLTM similar kind male with a lot of get up and go for romance and fun times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420355**

JACKIE lonely and looking for male company, 48-65. Need a bit of love and affection? Then I'm your girl. call me. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418169**

SARAH, curvaceous brunette, 35, passionate nature, solvent, OHAC, WLTM date again, looking for male to take me out. Looks/Age unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420207**

LYN, 43, divorced very lonely single mum, young looking, slim, attractive, WLTM similar male for companionship. Age/looks/Status unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418795**

KELLY young attractive vivacious 48yr old lady, loves good food, cosy nights in/out, holidays etc, WLTM male for mutual companionship **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420195**

CATHY, 42, good looking brunette with a real passion for life, seeking male for happy times, dates, chats, romance and more. Pls call. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420175**

TARA 22 tall slim but curvy with legs that go all the way up to heaven, WLTM very appreciative confident male for adult fun. Contact me anytime. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414701**

FEMALE, dark haired 5'10, curvy, likes reading, walking, cinema, seeks male 40-50 for lasting relationship. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5077545**

PROFESSIONAL black female age 52, enjoys evenings and days out, would like to meet similar Midlands male. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5315901**

CATHY, 42, good looking brunette with a real passion for life, seeking male for happy times, dates, chats, romance and more. P's call. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420073**

FEMALE fun brunette, attractive, 26, seeking male for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420715**

MAGGIE, 72 yrs young, good sense of humour, well presented, WLTM kind, sincere chappie to share coffee and a chat. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5310040**

LOUISE 35, dark hair, blue eyes, attractive ex air hostess, looking for fun times with older male for romantic nights in and more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420043**

39 yr old independent single Mom, knows the benefit of having a good man in the picture. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5084796**

FRANCES, 45, busty female, loves nights in/out, seeking uncomplicated male who can occupy my free time for quality companionship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420003**

FEMALE, seeks fun loving male who likes a drink and a laugh, to enjoy erotic experiences with a curvy brunette. Discretion guaranteed. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5079311**

AMANDA, 36, tall, slim, busty brunette seeks man, any age, any area, for discreet daytime fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418117**

BLUE eyed female, blonde hair, slim, GSOH, loving, caring, understanding, seeking similar male, 55-55. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416989**

MARY, pretty, friendly, lots of fun, lives in Kidderminster, loves the theatre, opera, ballet, wltm a lovely, charming, funny, genuine guy, 30s, to settle down with. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419883**

LOU, 45, lives in Shrewsbury, wltm a lady between 42-49 with blue eyes, must be kind, caring and funny to mend my broken heart, someone who likes to curl up on the sofa for cozy nights in. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419855**

FREYA 24yr old single mum, looking for male for free time frolics, call me if you're interested, it could be fun! **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419851**

LISA 38 slim attractive blonde, looking for a man who will appreciate a feminine, fashionable, fun, romantic sensual woman with a mind of her own, **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419839**

SARAH 38, slim, nice looking, sensual, tactile, no ties, WLTM kind, loving male to enjoy affectionate relationship. Any age/looks. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419821**

Single Men

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IAN, 5ft8, medium build, OHAC, late 50s, likes most things, holidays, gardening, motorbikes, WLTM similar aged lady, 50-60, with nice personality. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421345**

DAVID, 41yrs still single and looking for Ms Right. He has a good job and a lovely bachelor pad which misses a lady's touch. **Box: 4096375 Text only**

JOHN, 60s, sincere, looking to love and be loved, hurt in the past, likes meals out, sports and east coast. **Text only Mailbox: 4467786**

TOM, 58, dark hair, 6ft, seeks older mature female. Size and looks not important. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421595**

PROFESSIONAL male 62, looking for curvy feminine woman, 50-70, for relationship, loves theatre, films, music, concerts and breaks away. **Text only Mailbox: 4435871**

YOUNG looking 56 single male, looking for a relationship with petite 40 to 50 year old, likes going out/staying in. **Text only Mailbox: 5428643**

MIKE, 6ft, medium to big build, WLTM lady for no stings fun, discretion assured. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421359**

MALE seeking female, 45 plus, status unimportant, discretion assured for fun times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418481**

PHIL, 53, 5ft7, stocky athletic build, likes keep fit, swimming, cosy nights in, meals out, WLTM an honest, attractive, caring lady, with similar interests. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421385**

ROBERT, solvent gentleman, seeks female companion, to attend ice hockey, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421517**

MATURE 23 year old. Career minded. Workaholic. Looking for a chat maybe more? Age does not matter. **Text only Mailbox: 5423510**

NEIL 52, solvent, average build, GSOH seeks a caring romantic female for fun nights in and out, and lots of cuddles & kisses. **Text only Mailbox: 5418572**

YOUNG at heart male, smart, looks younger than age, likes socalising, looking for companionship & friendship. **Text only Mailbox: 5412069**

SHROPSHIRE trucker, 54, WLTM female, 40-65, black or white, for friendship, fun and hopefully more x **Text only Mailbox: 5411957**

WALSALL male looking for lady for no strings adult fun on a regular basis, within 10 miles of Walsall is preferred but not essential, age/looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420873**

DOMINANT Goddess sought by tall slim compliant white male, 50, who WLTM an elegant, sensual, high heeled lady, any age/race. **Text only Mailbox: 4673363**

MALE, 59, 5ft2, average build, looking for a genuine, caring lady, 55-65. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421089**

SMOKIN' rock geezer, 53, into gigging & camping WLTM rock chick 46-58ish, into similar, to share experiences, GSOH essential! **Text only Mailbox: 5414037**

ADVENTUROUS 35yr old male, slim, dark hair, likes music, bike rides and photography,

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seeks female for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417235**

50ISH male, seeking lady 60-75 for daytime fun, must be discreet. **Text only Mailbox: 4624030**

GRAHAM, 50s, 5ft10, blue eyes, very smart, OHAC, solvent, smoker, WLTM a very feminine, sensual, high heels lady, 36-52, for romantic evenings out and holidays, South Cheshire, Staffs, ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421103**

CARING male, 55, N/S, medium build, likes meals out, music, cinema, sports, driving, seeks female, 40-60 for friendship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 239148**

MALE 63, N/S, honest, GSOH, car owner, seeks female, 55-70 for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416817**

GENUINE male, 58, OHAC, looking for fun lady for no strings fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417601**

PHIL 57, OHAC, discreet, seeks no strings fun with younger female. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414991**

MALE 45yrs old, self-employed motor trader/mechanic, medium build, green eyes, average looks. I am a nice genuine and honest person looking for similar lady to share a honest permanent relationship and happy times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418709**

SOUTH Notts guy, 60, medium 5'10 seeks attractive lady for evening & weekend fun. **Text only Mailbox: 5339775**

MALE 63, N/S, GSOH, genuine, caring, likes music, travel, meals out, casual drink, seeks female, 50-70 for friendship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416997**

PHIL 55, divorced, 5ft 10ins, slim, OHAC, seeks female, 18 plus for discreet adult fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401875**

STEVE 58 yrs, 6ft, average build, seeking woman for NSA mutual pleasure, marital status unimportant. **Text only to mailbox: 5400701**

YOUNG at heart lonely 55yr old male, 5ft 10, medium build, n/s, GSOH, loyal, looking for a female for adult fun time, possible LTR. **Text only to mailbox: 5321154**

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MALE, 63, caring, easygoing, N/S seeks female 50-70 for friendship and romance. Looks unimportant. Likes occasional drink, eating in/out, cinema and driving. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418893**

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TOBY, looking for a responsible lady, 30-50, sensible with money, loving, passionate, romantic, single mum of one welcome. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420813**

MALE, 59, 5ft2, average build, seeks genuine, caring, lady, 55-65. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420721**

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BI-CURIOUS 45 years old, slim and good looking, looking for younger bi-curious guy for discreet fun. **Text only to Mailbox: 4917435**

57YR old male, slim, fit, seeks guy, 30-45 for fun and friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 309951**

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SLIM late 50's male, seeks gay/bi/CD, slim-medium build, 25-42 for fun and friendship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 336329**

I am looking for discreet fun with a male, age doesn't matter, get in touch if you are interested. **Text only to mailbox: 4172337**

CAROL, bi curious lady, blonde, 5ft2, short hair, blue eyes, size 14, WLTM a similar lady between 50-60 years old. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421281**

CHRIS genuine gay female, 55, smoker, likes days out, cosy nights in, seeks local, feminine gay female, 40-50's for special relationship. Nottinghamshire. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 373131**

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MODERN young at heart lonely lady, 70's, likes trips out, holidays, seeking similar lady for friendship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 410215**

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Richard Davies is targeting a return to the top of the world rankings

Richard Davies lines up the target

Hours spent practising is paying off for Richard Davies

Richard has his eye on the Rio Paralympic games

A few moments to relax and pose for a picture

With a double target in sight Davies is fired up

STOURBRIDGE shooter Richard Davies is fully focused on regaining world No.1 status and securing a place in the Great Britain team for the Rio Paralympic games.

The 44-year-old is having a fine year so far and became the British disabled shooting champion, after scoring a record 632.6 at the British Airgun Championships in Surrey..

At the end of January, he won bronze at the IPC Shooting World Cup in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates, where more than 300 disabled shooters from 30 different countries took part.

Impress

Davies, who made his Paralympic debut at London 2012, is now looking impress Team GB selectors and once again make it to the top of the world rankings.

"I have just regained my British title and I'm off to Poland for a World Championship competition in April, and hopefully I can move up the rankings after that," he said.

"Then I have got another tournament in Hanover, Germany, which is the final one before the team selection for Rio."

Davies was a wheelchair rugby player for 14 years but gave up the sport after failing to make the squad for the Beijing Paralympics in 2008.

He then dedicated himself to training to become a shooter, and made his international bow at the IPC Shooting World Cup in Antalya, Turkey one year later. In 2011, he reached No.1 in the world rankings and then fulfilled his dream of competing in the Paralympics in 2012.

SPORTING FEATURE

By Joe Edwards

"I train for 52 hours every week, working a lot on my concentration and almost go into a meditative state"

He placed 16th in the R4 10-metre air rifle standing mixed SH2 event and admitted the pressure of being in front of a huge home crowd got to him.

"London was unbelievable, our normal spectator crowds are of around 200 people but in London there was about 2,500 people and I really felt the home pressure," he said.

"I really felt it that day, it affected my psyche. The home pressure got to me, and I didn't perform as well as I should have.

"I have never felt anything like it, but I have been around the world for a few years since and I feel like I'm ready for Rio. The nerves have been put to one side."

At the IPC Shooting World Cup back in January, Richard had to maintain total concentration in temperatures of more than 30 degrees and said shooting almost requires going into a 'meditative state'. Having good stability and keeping your heart rate calm is paramount in shooting," he said. "I train for 52 hours every week, working a lot on my concentration and almost go into a meditative state."

The SH2 classification is for competitors who are not able to support the weight of the firearm with their arms and therefore require a spring mounted stand to shoot.

The target consists of 10 concentric scoring rings, with the central ring worth 10 points and the outside ring worth one.

Decimal

In the 10m air rifle event, the whole target is 4.5 centimetres in diameter and the central ring is just half a millimetre across.

Each competitor takes 60 shots at the target in a set time period, and then the eight top scoring athletes go through to a 10-shot final.

The shots in the final are scored to one decimal place, with a top score of 10.9, and are added on to the qualification score to determine the winner.

Davies is currently fourth in the IPC official world rankings for the R4 10-metre air rifle standing mixed SH2 event.

With the competition for places fierce, Davies has Rio in his sights and does not have a definite plan in place for the next few years to come.

"I just need to concentrate everything on Rio at the moment, and then take it from there," he added.

"I could look at coaching in the future, or look at going to Tokyo but I am 100 per cent committed to Rio at this point."

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Sport

Shooter Richard sets his sights on double target

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Glassboys back in hunt for play-offs

Stourbridge 2 Stamford 0

STOURBRIDGE climbed back into the play-off places after pulling off a deserved win over strugglers Stamford on Monday night.

The Glassboys made all the running in the first half but had to wait until the 35th minute before taking the lead when livewire left winger Chris Lait cut inside and delivered a delightful curling shot which flew home beyond the reach of a full stretch Stamford goalkeeper Paul Bastock.

George Bowerman blazed over the crossbar when well placed to score following a lovely four man move that pulled Stamford's defence apart.

Little had been seen of Stamford as an attacking force in the first half and they rang the changes at half time by bringing on all three substitutes, but it had little effect as Glassboys goalkeeper Matthew Gould was rarely threatened.

Stourbridge had to wait until the 87th minute before they finally put the game to bed, Justin Richards rifling in a dangerous cross which Bastock couldn't hold and the lurking Ashley Vincent, who'd replaced Bowerman in the 75th minute, made no mistake from the second attempt.

Stourbridge boss Gary Hackett was delighted to come away with victory at Ashton United on Saturday as they maintained their promotion bid.

The 3-2 win ended a three-match winless run on the road.

Goals for George Bowerman, Daniel Scarr and Karl Hawley gave the visitors a three-goal lead heading into half-time.

Ashton scored twice to give Hackett's men a late scare, but they held on.

Hackett said: "We fully deserved to win. "Every game is key at this stage in the season and we know that we're under a lot of pressure at the moment."

Win at neighbours keeps Pics in with promotion chance

Halesowen Town 1 Rushall Olympic 3

RUSHALL kept their lingering play-off hopes alive with a convincing victory over near-neighbours Halesowen.

The hosts failed to extend their recent good form and the first half belonged to Rushall with home goalkeeper Dan Platt forced into making an early 10th minute save from Andre Brown. It was no surprise when Rushall's Alex Reid burst down the left wing and crossed for man-of-the-match Mitchell Tolley to steer superbly into the net after 14 minutes.

The Pics doubled their lead when Reid swept home in the 34th minute after Tolley played a great ball for Josh McKenzie to deliver a left-wing cross.

Rushall goalkeeper Kieran Preston was barely troubled, although Dan Sweeney fired just over the bar in the 43rd minute and a more energetic Halesowen created second half chances.

Kris Taylor met Tolley's pass and cut in to stroke past Platt from 10 yards to make it 3-0 to Rushall in the 89th minute. Sweeney claimed Halesowen's consolation goal in injury time by rounding goalkeeper Preston to fire home.

Dudley-K spring the Leek defence

DK's Stefan Shillingford is grounded

Leek 25 DK 38

Rugby

WITH nothing riding on this end-of-season game, DK had been disrupted at the last minute with the loss of Ollie Shakespeare to illness, with a squad already showing some changes due to unavailabilities.

Meanwhile, Leek were fielding a team with an eye to the future.

DK kicked off with the advantage afforded by the slope and Ryan Wicketts gave them their first try, converted by Duncan Tompkins. The lead did not last long as Leek were back level at 7-7.

DK's next score came from Nic Adams, followed by a superb conversion from the touchline by Tompkins, who then added a penalty to increase the advantage. When Adams crashed over for his second try, Tompkins then hit the upright.

In the opening minutes of the second half Leek scored a converted try and a penalty. But DK hit back with a penalty from Tompkins. Then Leek kept the pressure on with a penalty of their own.

Stef Shillingford pounced over for a try, converted by Tompkins. A Leek try was ended with a Tomkins penalty.

STOUR POWER ON FOR WIN

Stourbridge 35 Chester 17

HAVING prevailed in the hard-fought reverse fixture played in driving rain back in late November, Stour looked to bounce back from a hammering at the hands of Tynedale.

What resulted was a curate's egg of a performance, a sublime five-try second half securing the win but preceded by an error-strewn first 40 minutes.

Stour kicked off into a fresh breeze and probed the Chester defences with ball in hand. A quick tap ball off a free-kick was moved left but an attempted cut-out pass was picked off by Chester outside-half Rhys Hayes found an empty backfield with the Stour backs all lined up in attack to run 50m before feeding a scoring pass to winger Craig Ross and then converting within five minutes.

A Chester attack put centre Tom Foden clean through near halfway but a foul play call saw the penalty award go to Stour. They drove an attack then moved the ball wide, but a pass off the floor was intercepted and Chester kicked clear. Stour countered with a run down the left flank by lock forward Chris Depper, the ball worked back right where replacement Josh Trinham was unmarked but the final pass to him drifted forward.

Callum Bennett then slipped through for a second try and it was 12-0 at the break.

Stour secured the restart kick and outside-half Chris Scott hoofed deep, Chester's clearance missing touch to set up a wave of attacks.

Flanker Joe Carpenter's pass found Bridger whose footwork saw him ghost through the defences to score under the posts.A forced pass was picked off by Trinham who hared 65m downfield to score, now it was 14-12, with Rodley then crashing over to score on 63 minutes, 21-12, opening the floodgates as Ash Elvers scored, 28-12.

A shortened Stour lineout in the Chester 22 then saw Rodley hit the line at pace and again crash over to make it 35 before Will Bown got a try back. Stour's next fixture is away at Otley on Saturday.

The depleted Lions lost 29-3 at home to Camp Hill, with George Tildesley bagging a penalty.

James Rodley touches down his second try for Stourbridge as they ruled the second half

Tromans close to best half marathon time

DK Runners took part in the Midland Counties Road Relays at Sutton Park on Saturday.

With the men running 12 stages and the ladies six legs there was competition for places. With both entering A and B teams there were 36 places up for grabs.

The men's A team's final finishing position was 31st of 48 in a total time of 4.49.54. Late injuries meant the B team was a man short. They were given a total time of 5.16.45 but, as an incomplete team, were not given a finishing position.

The ladies race was over six stages with their long legs on the first and third stages. The A team finished in 39th place in 3.07.57. The B team came home in 45th. Twenty four hours later Mark Gallimore recorded a time of 1.32.02 to place eighth in his age group and 371st overall in the Wilmslow Half Marathon.

Helen Tromans was only seconds off a PB recording 1.28.40 to place third in the Warwick Half Marathon, where Liz Comley made her half marathon debut in 2.04.48.

Purchase is eyeing place in top three

CRADLEY'S comeback man James Purchase is setting himself a target of a top three place in the Heathens team.

Purchase, who hadn't ridden for a decade before returning to the sport with the National League side, won a race in the opening night win over Belle Vue last week.

Now he wants to continue the winning form when the Motor Market side face Rye House at Wolverhampton next Monday.

Purchase said: "The main thing for me is I just want to have fun, because if I'm doing that then I'll probably be riding pretty well.

"If I'm enjoying myself then I'd like to think I can, realistically, get my average up to around seven or eight points and be pushing the big guns in the third heat-leader role.

"I'm not going to put too much pressure on myself, I just want to enjoy racing again and hopefully the points will come. I was pleased to get that first meeting out of the way against Belle Vue, and it was nice to help the team start with a win.

"It was a decent start for me, I was happy to get that first race win and I've definitely got something to work with and build on now.

"I'll be looking to try and do a bit better against Rye House in the next meeting."

Despite being away from the sport for nearly a decade, Purchase hopes his past experience can prove helpful to the younger members of the Heathens side.

He said: "Hopefully I can pass some of my experience on to the younger riders, because even though I haven't ridden for a while I've been there and done it in a way.

"I've been riding in the National League as a youngster, I know how hard it can be and so I'd like to think I can pass some of the stuff I learnt years ago on to those guys.

"At the same time, I'm sure they'll be able to help me as well.

Neal early leader in Touring Car placings

MATT Neal claimed an early lead in the standings as the British Touring Car Championships kicked off at Brands Hatch.

The Stourbridge-born race ace finished third, second and fifth place over the opening three races of the year, enough to earn him a five-point lead over Honda team-mate Gordon Shedden in the drivers' standings.

★★★

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